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THE
L E T T E R
OF THE HONOURABLE
C H A R L E S J A M E S F O X
TO THE
ELECTORS OF WESTMINSTER,
Dated January 26th, 1793.
WITH
A N A P P L I C A T I O N
OF ITS
PRINCIPLES
TO
S U B S E Q U E N T E V E N T S.
BY
ROBERT ADAIR, Esq. M.P.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

TO illustrate Mr. Fox's Letter, by pursuing the various topics to which it refers through the details connected with them, would demand a more extensive disquisition than it is possible to attempt except in a regular history. It has been judged better, therefore, to adopt a more limited plan for the present publication. The Letter itself, it will be recollect^d, is a summary of the arguments upon three motions which Mr. Fox made in the House of Commons on the 13th, the 14th, and the 16th of December 1792. His first motion had in view the internal state of this country as to Insurrections, and the means employed to quell them. His second, the Policy of negotiating with the existing French Government for peace. His third, the Mode of negotiating with it successfully for peace.

These divisions are observed, and the new matter added to the present edition is arranged thus: The text from p. 1 to 16 of the original printed copy, comprising the substance of what Mr. Fox said upon moving his amendment to the Address, is separated from the body of the work, and printed first. Then follow, as Results from the measures pursued in consequence of that Address, brief Expositions of the chief points in which our internal situation appears since that time to have been affected. A similar method is adopted in regard to the two succeeding divisions, namely, the text from p. 16 to 18, containing his motives for advising negotiation, is printed separately, to which are subjoined the proofs which justify these motives:—and lastly, the text from p. 18 to the end of the Letter, accompanied by the proofs, that to obtain peace at last, we have not only been obliged to negotiate for it upon Mr. Fox's principle, and in the manner he recommended, but that it was absolutely unattainable by any other means.

Such is the design of the present work. In the original cast of it, the completion of which
was

was necessarily delayed until the arrival of the Definitive Treaty, speculations on the Peace, as affecting the political state of Europe, were intended; and the Author had made some progress in them, when he was interrupted by a calamity, which, he is not ashamed to say, unfitted him for the further pursuit of controversial investigation. Death deprived him of a friend, of whom any attempt on his part to speak, were vain and useless. Let the universal, and to this hour unmitigated sorrow which attends the Duke of Bedford in his grave, express, in some degree, the feelings of one who was near him enough to see his virtues at their source; to have his heart strengthened by their example; and who owes to his vigilant benevolence all the comfort of his private life.

Yielding to these impressions, the Author was able to commit to the press only what he had already prepared, and which is entirely retrospective. In due time and season the rest may follow.

P R E F A C E.

AFTER an interval of nine years, Mr. Fox's Letter to his Constituents is again offered to the Public. For the reproduction of it at the present moment, it is needless to assign a motive. The signature, on any terms, of peace with the French Republic, is obviously sufficient of itself to invite a retrospective consideration of the reasons by which men had persuaded themselves, at one time, that even negotiation with such a government was impracticable. In promoting such a review, it may nevertheless be proper to disclaim any intention of presenting the result of it as a subject of personal triumph, or exultation to an individual. Of what may justly be denominated triumph, Mr. Fox can experience none of the sensations, except the consciousness of having done his utmost to avert those evils which visit every English heart with sorrow and shame. He can feel no exultation at seeing his own prophetic

phetic warnings reproachfully held up to an humbled people; while, unfortunately for them, he has no victory to boast over the system to which they owe their degradation. The republication of this Letter is undertaken simply from a general sense of what is due to truth: chiefly indeed of what is due to it in these times, —for of the justice of history to Mr. Fox there can be no fear. It is not fitting that the great question of his public conduct in 1792 should steal down the stream of occasional controversy, or lose itself in the stagnant impotence of what is now produced to the world for a system of amendment and moderation. In that eventful crisis there was nothing doubtful, nothing of a negative character, in his policy or actions. His advice was either the wisest, or it was the weakest; and the nation, for having rejected it, is either now triumphing in its own happy sagacity, or expiating in tears of blood its vain credulity and infatuation.

It will be remembered that this Letter first appeared in a moment far from favourable either to the courage or sincerity of the British cha-

racter. If the panic of the Popish plot in 1678 was absurd, that of the plot in 1792 was most disgraceful. In the case of the Popish plot, the fact, at least, of the existence of a conspiracy was supported by evidence, which, however improbable, was in its nature positive ; and coming as it did, full upon the public at once, with the impression of sudden discovery, it might excuse, in some degree, the baseness that never fails to accompany sudden fear. The plot of 1792 was of a very different character. If it was true that the Sheffield and other reforming societies, friends to Universal Suffrage, were then successfully pressing forward that speculation, it was a speculation all the mischiefs of which the public had been aware of for twenty years. If the progress of France in her revolution presented dreadful dangers, that revolution had been four years before the world, struggling against difficulties of every kind, many of them confessedly peculiar to that country, and all of a nature capable of being avoided by early measures of prevention. The situation of affairs in 1792 furnished, it is true, much reason for vigilance, for firmness, even for well-considered enterprise ; but

no situation whatever, much less one of real peril, could justify that paroxysm of cowardice which the nation seemed to have reached at once, and the sudden resignation of all its faculties and virtues to the worst suggestions that fear and fury could inspire.

A country like Great Britain cannot suffer in the character of its councils without greatly suffering in its interests. Of this truth the historian of the alarm of 1792 will have to detail many striking particulars in illustration. One of the first evils of that alarm, certainly one the least intended by those who caused it, was to perpetuate the condition of nullity and inefficiency in which it found our Executive Councils. This will appear a paradox to those who do not consider that unbounded power in a minister is perfectly consistent with the extreme of weakness in a government. Majorities in Parliament, however numerous, furnish no proof that the Government they support is a strong one. To be really strong it must arise out of a sound and healthy state. The authors and promoters of the alarm in 1792 deserve to be execrated for nothing so much as for

for having inverted this order, and diseased the state to invigorate the administration. They took a course which in its nature could only lead to embarrassment, debility, and, in the end, total dissolution. Such are inevitably the effects of admitting panic into the councils of a people. Individuals, when they deliver themselves up to its dominion, may still be protected by the law against many acts of their own folly ; but when a nation yields to it, the case is reversed. Then the law itself goes mad, and reserving its vindictive vigilance for the individual who retains his senses, becomes the instrument of precipitating all, both sober and frantic, to their destruction. Anarchy, or something very like it, is not far off from such a state. Law is good, not because it is a rule simply, but because it is a rule of reason ; anarchy is the absence of rule ; but panic supposes the absence of reason ; to legislate under panic, therefore, is to command ordinances which have no reference to any of the qualities of law except its force. This is no better than what Mr. Burke so well calls, in describing the system of the present reign for making administrations, “ the array of riot, and

discipline of confusion *." Such was the situation of the country in December 1792. The weakness of Government stood confessed; but by the course our terrors impelled us to pursue, we made a government that before was only weak, absolutely inefficient.

In truth, how could it be otherwise? Fear, in its blindness, fancies that all its weapons are mislaid. Following this distempered humour of the nation, Ministers snatched up in their haste the very opposite of those by which difficulty is to be encountered, or danger overcome. As a means of defence in such a moment, for instance, plain, well-intentioned men might reasonably have looked to the cultivation of a true spirit of union among ourselves. Ministers acted upon the direct contrary policy. They expected great benefit, and in a party point of view they were not deceived, by setting up new inventions for disunion and persecution; inventions, which taking ground upon fundamental principles, drew a line deep, broad, and impassable, between the great governing energies of the state. These, in

* *Thoughts on the present Discontents.*

our English system, have no means of acting separately. They are made to support, and to be supported by each other. Wealth, ready upon demand, such as we have seen it all throughout the war, is one of our great energies. Another is the discipline produced by the laws. Popular liberty is the greatest of all. Acting together in unison, they form a mass of strength to which, amidst the convulsions of the world, our island might trust at least for its individual safety. Unfortunately, it was resolved to break up this impenetrable line of defence by discarding its chief sustaining prop, and arming the influence of wealth and the action of the laws, against all popular interference in the affairs of Government. Our governors were afraid of the prevalence of a popular spirit; and what they felt themselves unequal to guide, they thought it best to destroy. He is but a sorry statesman, who, in the various exigencies of a public service for which he has to provide, can find no use for such a spirit. Mr. Burke eloquently laments the abolition of monastical institutions in France. He considers the decree for it as the sign of a most deplorable incapacity for government in the leaders of the

first Assembly at Paris. In the hands of statesmen, he says, they were “great powers *.” So is the spirit of liberty with all its vices. He who would root it out on account of a moment of popular agitation, is like a combatant who should cast away his sword just as he was marching up to his enemy, because he found the edge too sharp, and he might chance to get scratched by it in the struggle. This was precisely what Ministers did in 1792. Popular liberty was discredited as a resource, and disavowed as a principle of our constitution. The people were told that “they had nothing to do with the laws but to obey them.” The friends to popular rights were indiscriminately called Jacobins, levellers, and atheists. Men, of whom many had passed a long and laborious life in the sacrifice to public utility of all that bears any price in the eye of personal ambition; others, who, as they grew up to manhood, grew up into the practice of virtues, the example of which they deemed the richest inheritance of their fathers; others, to whom honour standing in the place of all advantages of birth or fortune, became for that reason

* Vide *Reflections, &c.*

although

although not a surer, a more active stimulant; men of this rare, and surely not unuseful stamp, were cast out to the devils of darkness, and were joined in cause, principle, and persons, with all that was low, coarse, stupid, and ferocious in the French revolution. It was thought favourable to the cause of Ministers to be opposed by persons whom they had thus libelled into some degree of temporary odium. They did indeed gain something by the contrivance, but it was an ignoble advantage, and came to them contaminated with the filth and feculence of the channels through which it had passed. They obtained, and were content to obtain, support, by a degrading comparison between the suspected views of their opponents, and their own undisputed incapacity; while occupied solely by manœuvres to defraud a rival of his popularity, they lost sight of the first object of a statesman's care, and instead of consolidating all our defensive forces against France, armed and exasperated one half of the British empire against the other.

It is plain that out of these perverted dispositions, Government, properly so called, could derive

derive no real stability or vigour. Not only Government, however, but even the Minister himself, could derive none, except for the purposes of mischief. All was left to chance in a crisis which demanded all that could be gathered from wisdom. The Minister had no fixed principle to determine, and no declared public opinion to guide him. He was in possession, and desired no better than to remain so. All he could wish men to do, therefore, by way of adding strength to Government, was to vote for his administration numerously, and to trust it implicitly. For the event he took his chance. Mr. Burke and the seceding Whigs, misled by the hope of exciting what they thought a high spirit of honour among the people, and through that, of forcing the Minister into their ulterior views, joined him with their votes, as it was his aim that they should, and took their chance, as he did, for the rest. Parliament took its chance with the Minister. The higher classes out of doors, the merchants, bankers, traders, and the new monied aristocracy, did the same. As to the lower orders, the *animæ viles*, they were soon put out of all consideration.

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The first pretexts that offered were eagerly seized to thrust them without the pale, to separate them from their rightful holds upon the constitution. These dispositions to trust to France, concurring among the chief parties and bodies of men in whom the powers of our state reside, naturally brought the state itself, simply, and without condition, into Mr. Pitt's hands. To keep it there, Mr. Pitt could think of nothing better than to use his power in the spirit in which it was given him. It were too much to assert of a man of his abilities, that he was ignorant of the part befitting him to act ; but most certainly he did not feel the vast and commanding ascendancy of his station. The great events which were passing every day, seemed to take him by surprise. He had not, as he candidly acknowledges in another place, “ rightly cast the character of the French revolution *.” He had a system to seek, and digest, and methodize, just at the very time when it ought to have been ready for use. Thus, notwithstanding his numbers, he found himself as a leader wholly without authority, the first essential of all rule and sway. In this situation of

* Vide Mr. Pitt's Speech, February 1800, p. 27.

omnipotent imbecility, where it was his business, and ought to have been his ambition, to guide, he was content to follow. In the general breaking up of all public councils, ready with nothing of his own, he was obliged to listen to every man's tale ; and as each division of the alarmed had its own separate source of terror to itself, and scorned to surrender a particle of it in favour of any other sect, there was nothing wild, discordant, or chimerical in human counsel to which he was not forced occasionally to conform. Perplexed by this universal distraction, which he had not character enough to calm, the fear of doing ill, inspired the caution of doing nothing. His administration, therefore, discovered nowhere the systematic application of a steady and vigorous principle. It subsided, after a time, into a strange and monstrous mixture of opposing interests and views. It became a sort of *amalgama* of alarms ; and thus produced a government incapable in any one of its branches of either firmness of council, or resolution of enterprise.

Of all schemes which could be devised, this assuredly was the least adapted to save us even from

from that description of dangers by which we were said to be surrounded. Those dangers were supposed chiefly to affect the monarchy. To secure the monarchy, all the old constitutional jealousies, and many of the legal checks, which the vigilance of centuries had interposed to restrain its excesses, were judged fit to be laid aside. The mistaken men who judged so, forgot, or did not comprehend, that the safety and preservation of the Crown itself constituted one main part of the wisdom of these restraints upon its power. By the first and fundamental principle of a free government, wheresoever there is power there is responsibility. The Sovereign who is yet to learn that there is such a right in his subjects as that of making him answer for an attempt to subvert the laws, is not the Sovereign of a free People. To defend themselves against such a subversion, and to prevent the Sovereign from making such an attempt, a People must possess somewhere, in forms more or less popular or aristocratical, an efficient control over his authority. But what is meant by an efficient control? Let us take the instance of the British constitution. The king can do no wrong; yet no man of sense infers

from this maxim the king's supremacy over the law. All that the English people acknowledge it to mean, is, that wrong being done, it is not the king's wrong, but his minister's. They intend by it that the deep, ultimate responsibility attached to all power in cases of extreme necessity, shall, in an English first magistrate, be cautiously, reverently, but most indulgently too, kept out of sight and reach, by the interposition of subordinate responsibilities attaching directly upon the persons of those who have in their custody any part of the force of the State. This true and only meaning of the maxim, every part of our English history declares, establishes, and vindicates. So it does every general maxim of just freedom, and of prudent control over the excesses of freedom. So it does the doctrine that government is a trust, undertaken by those who accept it under the special contract and covenant of performing its duties, or forfeiting its benefits ; and so it does the irresistible consequence from that doctrine, that when governors have committed an act of forfeiture they may be cashiered or dethroned, as James the Second was cashiered or dethroned, no matter which, at the Revolution.

Those who devote themselves to a public life, ought, before they advance one step upon the stage, thoroughly to master this theory of the responsibility of power. It comprehends the whole of their duties, and the whole knowledge, except what is merely technical, of the laws and constitution. Aided by the lights of history, it will teach them that it is by the strict and severe preservation alone of the lower and subordinate responsibilities, that a People smarting under oppression can be prevented from looking to the highest and the last. By adhering and acting up to its true sense, it will enable them to avert that NECESSITY, which can alone have an existence when all intermediate responsibilities are destroyed. It will teach them that these are among the best defences of the Crown, which, by their failure, becomes exposed, single and unsupported, to the full vehemence of popular indignation ; that they may be destroyed, not alone by popular violence beginning at this end first, but by the excesses of a blind and criminal zeal for monarchy, exalting it in its principle above the common sense, and driving it in its practice beyond the endurance of mankind. It will warn those who wish to rest

their loyalty upon a rational foundation, that ungracious indemnities in favour of the agents, are sure, in some mode, to be visited at last upon the principal. Such men, too, will see and understand that the notion of indemnity is not to be limited to the narrow sense of an act of Parliament; passed to prevent actions upon the case against a petty constable, but must be taken in the broad and only true one, of the interposition, by contrivance as well as by force, by influence, example, and participation, as well as by mere prerogative and power, of any thing that shall operate as a bar against the complaints of a people. It is not the factious and disaffected, it is the just, the sober, and the reflecting, who will perceive that this mode of strengthening the Minister in 1792, besides what may be objected to it on other accounts, was greatly at the expense of the Crown. A majority of the House of Commons, by becoming parties to Mr. Pitt's acts, and thus sheltering him from all retrospect, took the responsibility from the lower, and threw it into the ascending scale. They weakened monarchy on the side of its principle, more than they secured it on the side of its means; and directed those acrid

popular humours of which they professed so much fear, into a channel that leads directly to the heart.

If the scheme which was built upon this alarm, therefore, was ill suited to the exigencies of our domestic situation, the terms on which we have consented to a peace, will prove that it was equally so to the conduct of a war. That the necessity of agreeing to such terms was produced by a system of war which left the whole of its principle, as well as its conduct, to the caprice of a minister, will admit of little dispute. Former ministers, in their contests with France, found a sure guide to their policy in the feelings of the people. There was a day when the loss of a battle in the Netherlands, or the capture of a single town of the Dutch barrier, would have alarmed the stoutest of them for the stability of his power. Under the system just described, we have witnessed, without its exciting a single murmur, or perhaps even a regret, first, the whole barrier, and next the country it was to protect, swept down into the dust by the arms of France. Why was this? Why, but because in the frenzy of indiscriminate surrender,

surrender, we had given up to the very mind of our country? No man cared for the taking of the Low Countries or Holland, because no man felt his pride in their protection. If the public cared nothing for such objects, why should the Minister contend for them? Why should he delay for an hour his own little interest in a peace? The answer is before our eyes. We saw this deadening indifference extend itself during the war to the whole of our failures. We see it now, as well in the articles of peace as in their reception. Hand in hand with poverty and sorrow, it preceded and prepared the triumphant entry of the preliminaries into every district of the country. Who values our cessions? Who dreams about the balance of power? Who vexes himself about the Netherlands, or Holland, or Savoy, or Italy, or any of the objects of our former struggles? None of the present ministers: perhaps one or two of the last; but of the great mass of the nation, scarcely any, and of those few, the more considerable portion will be to be looked for among the steadiest opponents of the war.

In the better days of our country its feelings were of a different sort ; and even in 1792 we might have been roused to such feelings. Some of the old spirit was yet in existence ; but, by mistaking its character, those to whose custody it belonged deprived themselves of the means of calling it into action. They mistook it for an indiscriminate hatred of every thing French. They forgot that France, whether wisely or wickedly employed, had begun to have a public cause. There is no doubt among those who have studied the character of the English common people, that much of their hatred of the French was bottomed in contempt. They despised a nation, that, under grievances which had exhausted their own patience, had not spirit enough to pursue the same courses for redrefs. They hated them afterwards for the love they themselves bore to their own glorious act of 1688, which they had to defend so frequently against French kings and French principles. These, right or wrong, liberal or contracted, were the foundations of the English Antigallican spirit. The ministers of our day took up a different notion. To be against France,

no matter why, constituted with them all that was necessary to make an Antigallican. This was to be translators instead of statesmen. They left out the two chief members of the definition. France, it is true, had done enough to call forth in us as much of the Antigallican spirit in one way as we had ever felt; but in proportion as the sources of that spirit were lessened or altered, those from which it was to flow ought to have been carefully cleared of all rubbish and impurities. No truly English heart, for instance, could bear, under pretence of Antigallicanism, to associate itself with the principles of the Duke of Brunswick's manifesto. We came indeed afterwards to these principles, but it was by degrees, and because we had neglected the proper moment of protesting against the measures which drew us into them. Mr. Fox offered us that moment in 1792. When he introduced the three motions to Parliament which form the matter of his Letter, there was then an opportunity not only of getting clear of the false, but of calling out to its utmost extent the true Antigallican spirit; if by that spirit men will be content to understand resistance

to

to the power of France upon the continent as long as an army could be brought into the field, and resistance to her attacks upon ourselves as long as a man of us remained. This was the proper moment; but it was the last that could offer. The declarations of the British Parliament in answer to his Majesty's Speech of the 13th of December were irrevocably to fix the character of all our future proceedings with regard to France.

In this Letter Mr. Fox has pointed out distinctly the road he would have pursued towards an object which at that period all parties professed to have in common. His proposals were received by the House of Commons with no ordinary degree of opposition and resentment. They have met with a fate not rare in the history of mankind, namely, that of being contemned in the first flushes of hope and the vivacity of insolence, and of being resorted to in the danger of defeat and the humility of disappointment. After nine years of unexampled misfortune, their wisdom is now confirmed by the common suffrage of mankind; by his Sovereign, to whom he was represent-

meditating the subversion of the Throne; by a Parliament ever deaf to his voice; by the friends by whom he was disclaimed, and a people by whom he was abandoned.

A

L E T T E R,

&c.

TO vote in small minorities is a misfortune to which I have been so much accustomed, that I cannot be expected to feel it very acutely.

To be the object of calumny and misrepresentation gives me uneasiness, it is true, but an uneasiness not wholly unmixed with pride and satisfaction, since the experience of all ages and countries teaches us that calumny and misrepresentation are frequently the most unequivocal testimonies of the zeal, and possibly of the effect, with which he against whom they are directed has served the public.

But I am informed, that I now labour under a misfortune of a far different nature from these, and which can excite no other sensations than those of concern and humiliation. I am told that *you* in general disapprove my late conduct, and that, even among those whose partiality to me was most conspicuous, there are many who, when I am attacked upon the present occasion, profess themselves neither able nor willing to defend me.

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That your unfavourable opinion of me (if in fact you entertain any such) is owing to misrepresentation, I can have no doubt. To do away the effects of this misrepresentation is the object of this Letter ; and I know of no mode by which I can accomplish this object at once so fairly, and (as I hope) so effectually, as by stating to you the different motions which I made in the House of Commons in the first days of this session, together with the motives and arguments which induced me to make them.—On the first day I moved the House to substitute, in place of the Address, the following Amendment :

“ To express to his Majesty our most zealous attachment to the excellent constitution of this free country, our sense of the invaluable blessings which are derived from it, and our unshaken determination to maintain and preserve it.—To assure his Majesty, that, uniting with all his Majesty’s faithful subjects in those sentiments of loyalty to the Throne, and attachment to the Constitution, we feel in common with them the deepest anxiety and concern, when we see those measures adopted by the Executive Government, which the law authorizes only in cases of insurrection within this realm.

“ That his Majesty’s faithful Commons, assembled in a manner new and alarming to the country, think it their first duty, and will make

“ it

" it their first business, to inform themselves of
 " the causes of this measure, being equally
 " zealous to enforce a due obedience to the laws
 " on the one hand, and a faithful execution of
 " them on the other."

My motive for this measure was, that I thought it highly important, both in a constitutional and a prudential view, that the House should be thoroughly informed of the ground of calling out the militia, and of its own meeting, before it proceeded upon other business.

The law enables the King, in certain cases, by the advice of his Privy Council, having previously declared the cause, to call forth the militia —and positively enjoins, that whenever such a measure is taken, Parliament shall be summoned immediately.

This law, which provided that we should meet, seemed to me to point out to us our duty when met, and to require of us, if not by its letter, yet by a fair interpretation of its spirit, to make it our first business, to examine into the causes that had been stated in the Proclamation as the motives for exercising an extraordinary power lodged in the Crown for extraordinary occasions; to ascertain whether they were true in fact, and whether, if true, they were of such a nature as to warrant the proceeding that had been grounded on them.

Such a mode of conduct, if right upon general
 B 2 principles,

principles, appeared to me peculiarly called for by the circumstances under which we were assembled; and by the ambiguity with which the causes of resorting for the first time to this prerogative, were stated and defended.

The insurrections (it was said) at Yarmouth, Shields, and other places, gave Ministers a legal right to act; and the general state of the country, independently of these insurrections, made it expedient for them to avail themselves of this right. In other words, insurrection was the *pretext*, the general state of the country the *cause* of the measure. Yet insurrection was the motive stated in the Proclamation: and the Act of Parliament enjoins the disclosure, not of the pretext, but of the cause: so that it appeared to be doubtful whether even the letter of the law had been obeyed; but if it had, to this mode of professing one motive and acting upon another, however agreeable to the habits of some men, I thought it my duty to dissuade the House of Commons from giving any sanction or countenance whatever.

In a prudential view, surely information ought to precede judgment; and we were bound to know what really was the state of the country, before we delivered our opinion of it in the Address. Whenever the House is called upon to declare an opinion of this nature, the weight which ought to belong to such a declaration, makes it highly important that it should be founded

founded on the most authentic information, and that it should be clear and distinct. Did the House mean to approve the measure taken by Administration, upon the ground of the public pretence of insurrections ? If so, they were bound to have before them the facts relative to those insurrections, to the production of which no objection could be stated. Did they mean by their Address to declare that the general situation of the country was in itself a justification of what had been done ? Upon this supposition, it appeared to me equally necessary for them so to inform themselves, as to enable them to state with precision to the public the circumstances in this situation to which they particularly adverted. If they saw reason to fear impending tumults and insurrections, of which the danger was imminent and pressing, the measures of his Majesty's Ministers might be well enough adapted to such an exigency ; but surely the evidence of such a danger was capable of being submitted either to the House or to a Secret Committee ; and of its existence without such evidence, no man could think it becoming for such a body as the House of Commons to declare their belief.

If, therefore, the Address was to be founded upon either of the suppositions above stated, a previous inquiry was absolutely necessary. But there were some whose apprehensions were directed not so much to any insurrections, either

actually

actually existing, or imminently impending, as to the progress of what are called French opinions, propagated, as is supposed, with industry, and encouraged with success; and to the mischiefs which might in future time arise from the spirit of disobedience and disorder, which these doctrines are calculated to inspire. This danger, they said, was too notorious to require proof; its reality could better be ascertained by the separate observations of individual members, than by any proceeding which the House could institute in its collective capacity; and upon this ground, therefore, the Address might be safely voted, without any previous inquiry.

To have laid any ground for approving without examination, was a great point gained for those who wished to applaud the conduct of Administration; but in this instance I fear the foundation has been laid without due regard to the nature of the superstructure which it is intended to support; for, if the danger consist in false but seducing theories, and our apprehensions be concerning what such theories may in process of time produce, to such an evil it is difficult to conceive how any of the measures which have been pursued are in any degree applicable. Opinions must have taken the shape of overt acts, before they can be resisted by the fortifications in the Tower; and the sudden embodying of the militia, and the drawing of the regular troops to the

the capital, seem to me measures calculated to meet an immediate, not a distant mischief.

Impressed with these ideas, I could no more vote upon this last vague reason, than upon those of a more definite nature; since, if in one case the premises wanted proof, in the other, where proof was said to be superfluous, the conclusion was not just. If the majority of the House thought differently from me, and if this last ground of general apprehension of future evils (the only one of all that were stated, upon which it could with any colour of reason be pretended that evidence was not both practicable and necessary), appeared to them to justify the measures of Government; then, I say, they ought to have declared explicitly the true meaning of their vote, and either to have disclaimed distinctly any belief in those impending tumults and insurrections, which had filled the minds of so many thousands of our fellow-subjects with the most anxious apprehensions; or have commenced an inquiry concerning them, the result of which would have enabled the House to lay before the public a true and authentic state of the nation, to put us upon our guard against real perils, and to dissipate chimerical alarms.

I am aware, that there were some persons who thought, that to be upon our guard was so much our first interest, in the present posture of affairs, that even to conceal the truth was less mischievous, than to diminish the public terror.

They

They dreaded inquiry, lest it should produce light; they felt so strongly the advantage of obscurity in inspiring terror, that they overlooked its other property of causing real peril. They were so alive to the dangers belonging to false security, that they were insensible to those arising from groundless alarms.—In this frame of mind they might, for a moment, forget that integrity and sincerity ought ever to be the characteristic virtues of a British House of Commons; and while they were compelled to admit that the House could not, without inquiry, profess its belief of dangers which (if true) might be substantiated by evidence, they might, nevertheless, be unwilling that the salutary alarm (for such they deemed it) arising from these supposed dangers in the minds of the people, should be wholly quieted. What they did not themselves credit, they might wish to be believed by others. Dangers, which they considered as distant, they were not displeased that the public should suppose near, in order to excite more vigorous exertions.

To these systems of crooked policy and pious fraud, I have always entertained a kind of instinctive and invincible repugnance; and, if I had nothing else to advance in defence of my conduct but this feeling, of which I cannot divest myself, I should be far from fearing your displeasure. But are there, in truth, no evils in a false alarm, besides the disgrace attending those who are concerned in propagating it? Is it no-
thing

thing to destroy peace, harmony, and confidence, among all ranks of citizens? Is it nothing to give a general credit and countenance to suspicions, which every man may point as his worst passions incline him? In such a state, all political animosities are inflamed. We confound the mistaken speculatist with the desperate incendiary. We extend the prejudices which we have conceived against individuals, to the political party, or even to the religious sect of which they are members. In this spirit a judge declared from the bench, in the last century, that poisoning was a Popish trick; and I should not be surprised if bishops were now to preach from the pulpit, that sedition is a Presbyterian or a Unitarian vice. Those who differ from us in their ideas of the constitution, in this paroxysm of alarm we consider as confederated to destroy it. Forbearance and toleration have no place in our minds; for who can tolerate opinions, which, according to what the deluders teach, and rage and fear incline the deluded to believe, attack our lives, our properties, and our religion?

This situation I thought it my duty, if possible, to avert, by promoting an inquiry. By this measure the guilty, if such there are, would have been detected, and the innocent liberated from suspicion.

My proposal was rejected by a great majority. I defer with all due respect to their opinion, but retain my own.

R E S U L T S.

The preceding pages, in which the grounds for the vote of December 1792 are so closely sifted, offer three important points of view, in which the propriety and wisdom of that vote may now be considered. First, as it has affected the credit and character of the House of Commons ; seconly, the means of opposing, should it ever become necessary, an effectual parliamentary resistance to the will of the Crown ; thirdly, the civil state and condition of the inferior classes of the community.

I.

In regard to the House of Commons, having engaged itself to vote, upon mere trust, a fact of so important a nature as the existence of a disposition to insurrection among the people of this country, its credit became pledged to that fact against whatever testimony might afterwards be produced to invalidate it. Of this the Minister took good care to remind the majority, whenever he felt himself hard pressed in debate. On every motion for inquiry, it was his constant practice to appeal to their pride and consistency, whether they were prepared, by granting it, to retract all their measures, to falsify all their votes, and acknowledge their whole conduct to have been grounded in ignorance and injustice ? It followed obviously from hence, that whatever might happen in the interval, this difficulty was sure to meet them in the end, namely, that unless they should then be able to shew that they had completely subdued the insurrectionary spirit, they would be forced to

to admit, by compromising with it, that they had acted upon a false sense of its danger. What they were warned of is arrived ; and the House of Commons, to get back to a state of peace and internal tranquillity, finds itself now compelled to retract and recant the substance of every one of its former votes. The loss of character to the national representation by the appearance of so much levity, is irreparable. Can there in truth be a sight so afflictingly humiliating to the national pride, as the exultation in the peace just signed, which is now manifested by men who, for the nine preceding years, have directed all their efforts to the overthrow of the French revolution, avowedly as the only means by which they could secure the existence of the British state? For let them not hope to escape under lofty and ambiguous generalities. They cannot deny that by their vote on this day, they declared the country to be in a state very near that of actual rebellion. They cannot deny that they were led into this vote not by facts, but by fear. They cannot deny having told us that this disposition to rebellion would last as long as republicanism should last in France. They cannot deny their having connected inseparably the two cases of French and English revolution ; and this not so much on account of what the Republic had actually done to promote insurrection here, as on account of the tendency of its example to produce that effect. Now what says the treaty ?—“ That “ there shall be peace, friendship, good under-“ standing, perfect harmony between the two “ countries, and that nothing shall disturb for “ the future their HAP^Y UNION.” Union ! Is France then left by the peace with fewer means of working upon the English insurrectionary

spirit than she possessed in December 1792? Or is the example of splendid success less seductive than that of doubtful experiment? The map of the world is an answer to the first of these questions, as common sense is to the second. For what is the difference between the English insurrectionary spirit now, and when Parliament voted it? Has it been suppressed by force, or subdued by mildness? Have any of its leaders been taken and executed, or argued with, and converted? Is it dissipated by a sober comparison among the lower orders, of the blessings they enjoy in 1802, with those they enjoyed in 1792? Have they more now than they had then for food and clothing? Are these necessaries more within their reach? Or do they find that such terrible vengeance have been inflicted upon the people of France by the kings and emperors of Europe, that they had better be quiet, for fear of provoking a confederacy against themselves? None, surely, of these motives are likely to have availed against a true Jacobin spirit; and this most terrible of all insurrections, which menaced the throne, the altar, property, law, life, and liberty, so far from being crippled in any one of its minutest members, beaten from any one of its strong holds, or discouraged in any one of its gigantic views, would at this moment be ready to pour forth with its hundred hands the full phials of the wrath of Heaven, but for one short and simple reason—that no such insurrection, or disposition to it, ever existed.

But this reason will not save the majority of the two Houses. They voted its existence; they grounded the whole system of their domestic policy on its existence; they pursued this policy (and here alone Ministers acted on any steady plan)

plan) through a series of measures, each growing out of the other, and all directed to the suppression of a Jacobin conspiracy in Great Britain inseparably allied, according to them, with a Jacobin revolution in France. They voted the existence of this conspiracy in 1792, in 1795, in 1797, and so late as in 1801. Yet with the mischief in full life and vigour, as to this hour it must be if their former doctrine was true, they are now ready to swear upon the altar of the constitution, perpetual peace, union, and intercourse with the French Republic;—with the Jacobin Republic, one and indivisible, founded on the Sovereignty of the People, on Liberty and Equality, and the principles of the Rights of Man!!!

If, indeed, these gentlemen had found reason to change their former opinions, no disgrace could have attached upon them for the manly acknowledgment of such a change. A majority did so in the American war. Inquiry might have induced the present majority to have done the same at many periods of the war just concluded. But amidst all their joy for the peace, they disclaim the least alteration in their sentiments. Things, they say, and not themselves, are changed. The horrors of anarchy are now over: the revolutionary fury is extinguished; and France is cured of jacobinism. Is she so? What has cured her? The acquisition of immense territories? These were the means of spreading the dominion of jacobinism. The naval losses she has sustained? These can only balance her continental successes; for among all the splendid trophies of our Howes and our Nelsons, it would be difficult to produce a single converted Jacobin. What then has cured France? Herself. And

And that she would cure herself, the House of Commons was told, not only before the war, but on every motion, and in every argument for peace for these last nine years. The answer was always, that out of the principles of jacobinism no state of things could arise to which Great Britain could trust for a secure peace. Here is another part of the difficulty in which the House is involved; for what is the present government? Mr. Pitt, in an eloquent speech, after deducing its pedigree from the same Jacobin spirit which had deposed and murdered the King, and produced the bloody tyranny and confiscations of Robespierre and the Directories, declared it to be a government differing from those which had preceded it only in being more able to give effect to that spirit; and one with which no safe compromise could exist, while “placed in *such hands*, “and retaining the *same means* of annoyance*.” The majority of the House of Commons agreed in that description of it. But their reason for approving the present peace, is, that it is made with a government in its character precisely the reverse: a government on which they can depend for the moderation of its views, the mildness of its temper, and the steadiness of its public faith. Now here they must make their choice; for if this last character of the Consular Government, which has not changed from the first day of its appointment, be true, that reasoning must be false which guided their policy during nine years; and if Mr. Pitt’s description of it be true, they will have most seriously to answer to their Constituents for sanctioning a peace which leaves them exposed to the most imminent dangers.

* Mr. Pitt’s Speech, 3d February 1800, page 110.

In either case it is to be feared that the character of the House must suffer, in the first, on the score of its wisdom, in the second on that of its consistency.

II.

2. The next consequence of that vote was the disunion and destruction of a party which under the combined influences of public principle and private honour had acted together for twenty years; and by its long union and consistency, had materially contributed to preserve that balance between Crown and People which is the only practical security for the British constitution.

This balance is not a mere theory, or vain metaphysical abstraction, as the reasoning of some writers would reduce it to, who seem wholly to have mistaken the nature of the powers of which it is composed. According to the popular speculation, both the balance of the constitution, and the security for it, consists in the nice and exact distribution of the powers of its several branches. The fact is the very reverse. In the distribution of powers there is no balance; and it is because there is none in their distribution, that a balance is gained in their exercise. What indeed could be more absurd and inconsistent than a scheme of government which supposes a balance, and at the same time gives to one man the power, by his mere will, of counteracting the collective determinations of a whole community? For let it be recollected that a King of England, responsible himself to no existing tribunal, may perform many of his most important functions without the intervention even of any person who is responsible. He may negative the wisest and most necessary bill, and dissolve the honestest parliament.

What

What makes the excellence of our constitution is a happy practice, growing out of the common feelings of mankind, which turns to the best account, forms that might otherwise paralyse all wisdom or excellence, by providing the quickest appeals against injustice, and leaving the freest course to human action. Hence it becomes to us absolutely invaluable; because although a more perfect theory might possibly be given us, no invention can supply the convenient and easy vigour of the old practice. This practice, in its turn, is regulated by compromise; it is to the spirit of compromise, therefore, pervading and penetrating our constitution to the very bottom, and bending all its powers to one point, that we must look for the true causes of that balance at the top, which keeps the three estates in their several places. By what means indeed this spirit acts, and how it circulates through all the veins of the state, until it falls back again into the grand reservoir of Public Will at the bottom of which lies its source, were an investigation of a very wide scope, and not immediately suited to the present purpose. It is sufficient that all parts, and all interests, even those of the humblest classes of British subjects, have their share, great or little, in producing the result, and establishing a presiding power that watches over and preserves the ends for which King, Lords, and Commons, are appointed.

That union of vast and complicated interests known in England by the name of WHIG, was, while it existed, one, and no inconsiderable party to this compromise. It was a connexion that had for its express end and object, the maintenance of the balance. It was not the work of a day, but laboured out its existence through

much difficulty, and many civil woes. He who may have leisure or curiosity (all other motives, it is to be feared, are over) to trace it from the Bill of Exclusion to these days, will find it in more periods than one of our history, keeping by its own force, and natural influence, the government steady upon its base. The Whigs were taught the use of this influence by the virtues which had acquired it for them. Their notions of government were fixed and determined; and as it was of the very essence of their system that none of their principles should be concealed, nor any of their views kept back, the public had always a fair choice between their adversaries and themselves. Their fundamental tenet was, that the Liberty of the English People was the End of the English Constitution. They did not suffer their course to be diverted, or their action suspended, by that previous question of hypocritical despotism, “Who are the People?” They understood by the People, all those whom the Creator had endued with the powers of thinking, of acting, and of suffering;—those over whose reason imposture might endeavour to gain a sway; those over whose actions tyranny might usurp a control; those to whose sufferings tyrants are ever deaf. These were THE PEOPLE, in the eyes of our great ancestors, the authors of the revolution in 1688. Their code was simple. Government was *from* the People; it was *for* the People; and when abused, was to be resisted *by* the People.

Taking ground upon these principles, the founders of the Whig system knew, that in their extreme, they were not for every day’s use. Their chief object, therefore, was a balance. Sometimes it was to preserve it; sometimes to

restore it ; but they never lost sight of that balance. They did not at the Revolution. That great act was a compromise. The Whigs then did not go to the extreme of their principles. To dethrone King James, and elect King William, they did not think it necessary for the people to put forth their whole strength, and begin government again under a new contract. The case was, indeed, a case of necessity as to the disposing of James, but a necessity that called for nothing beyond his de-thronement. They acted then as *restorers* of the ancient constitution. Their great bent and aim since, has been to act as its *preservers* ; as persons who dedicate their labours, influence, and example, to avert that case of extreme necessity in which nothing remains for man but to resist tyranny or be enslaved by it.

The Whigs who associated under the Marquis of Rockingham against the court system of the present reign, either associated upon these principles, or they were, as the court instruments described them, a little faction of families struggling for power. The few that remain of those Whigs think better of their association. They rest upon the history of its origin and objects, given by Mr. Burke in one of his noblest performances, “ The ‘ Thoughts on the present Discontents.’ ” They think they were a party to *preserve* the constitution in its balance ; to *restore* that balance where it was lost ; and, as far as in them lay, to *prevent* and *avert* the necessity of restoring it through any other means than the efforts of their own generous combination.

Peace be to the *manes* of that combination ! May its dispersion impress those who composed it with the truth of one great maxim of its illustrious defender, “ To construct, is a work of
skill ;

“ skill; to demolish, force and fury are sufficient*!” To them, unhappily, wisdom itself can now be of no further use. Nothing can ever restore them to what they have lost. As a body of men, able by their union to effect any object of public good, there was an end of them from the moment they joined Mr. Pitt. They were warned of this in time. “ Let me address one word,” said Mr. Fox, in his speech on that day †, “ to my valued friends. Let them reflect on the consequences of their recent delusion. The measure of the Proclamation ‡ is now stated to be over. It has failed. Let them avoid all further snares of the same kind. They will reflect upon the necessity of union from the advantages which have flowed from it. They cannot feel more than I do the benefits of the cordial co-operation of that body of men, who through the whole of the present reign have had to struggle with prejudice as well as enmity. Let them recollect the manner in which the present Ministers came into power; let them reflect on the insidious attempts which have often been made to disjoin us; and now, that the Proclamation is over, let them avoid, I repeat, all such snares in future.”

They did not avoid those snares. Pushed on by the rashness of fear, they broke their great contract with the public, took offices under Mr. Pitt, and soon were melted down into the common mass of his administration. It were vain to trace them further. Important public objects

* Burke. † 13th December 1792.

‡ Consultations on issuing a proclamation against seditious writings had taken place with Mr. Pitt during the preceding summer. Of these Mr. Fox was not informed until afterwards by common report.

indeed were promised us from this coalition. If Earl Fitzwilliam is to be believed, they had stipulated for the government of Ireland, in order to carry into effect a system in favour of the Catholics, which had ever been considered as one of the leading measures of the Whig policy. If Mr. Burke is to be believed, the principle of the war was to have been given up to them, and it was to be carried on in future against the Jacobin Republic; against France as *a faction*, and not against France as *a state*. Both these stipulations were broken almost as soon as made. Earl Fitzwilliam went to Ireland to carry through, as he thought, the Catholic system. The first step he took in it was the signal for his sacrifice; as his sacrifice was the first signal for rebellion. As to the promised change in the conduct of the war against France, the Whig alarmists soon found how little their new colleague was disposed to humour any of their romantic speculations, or keep any of his engagements with them in favour of its monarchy. They coalesced with him in 1794. The very next year he made them consent to advise his Majesty to declare his readiness from the throne to listen to proposals for peace from the Jacobin Directory*. In 1796 he made them consent that Mr. Wickham should propose a negotiation to Mr. Barthelemy at Basle. In September the same year, he made them consent to send Lord Malmesbury with regular credentials to Paris. In 1797 he made them consent to repeat the same ceremony at Lille; and when that negotiation broke off, to give a solemn pledge to the world, that his Majesty would be ready to resume it whenever the Directory should feel itself so inclined on their side.

* Vide his Majesty's speech at the opening of the Sessions, October 1795.

Thus ended the two objects for which the Duke of Portland and his friends had coalesced with Mr. Pitt; and thus ends, it is to be feared, all hope of again making a firm and united stand in the House of Commons against an influence which exceeds, in point of real power, any thing a Stuart could have claimed under the old prerogative.

III.

The other mischief which may be traced to this vote, relates to the civil state and condition of the people. When the dispersion and dissolution of the Whig party had stripped the people of their natural defence against the Crown, a great breach was effected in the relations of the several classes with each other. Government made that breach irreparable. Government, even in the commonest matters, was no longer left to its natural process. Listening to its fears alone, it was forced for every day's use to press upon a spring which derived all its elasticity from the encouragement of fear among its subjects. This great engine of separation was continually at work, and with so fatal an ingenuity of contrivance, that in twelve months from the date of the war, all confidence between man and man was banished from the lower classes of English society. The placid harmony which had long smiled in the honest faces of a well-meaning, innocent people, gave way to "dark suspicion and tyrannous mistrust." Forbearance and moderation were no more, and every man became the instrument or the victim of persecution. The cry of jacobinism rang through the land. If any thing were wanting to prove the wickedness of the proceedings of Government for these last nine years, it will be found in the use made of the word "jacobinism" against the poorer orders. The base cabal which began this clamour did not venture

ture openly to attack the higher ones even of an opposition delivered up to their vulgar vengeance. The very frown of the old warriors of the constitution struck the daggers from their hands. But it was not so with persons in the humbler walks of life. They could make no stand against an armed rabble of spies and listeners, and the low instruments of village tyranny, that, spreading in all directions, had established themselves among the different volunteer associations, and infecting them with the spirit of the parent association of the metropolis*, plagued and poisoned every parish. Countenanced by Administration, and by many of the Whig alarmists, the contrivers of these associations pursued their point with method and steadiness. Their foundation was ready laid in the zeal of the superior ranks. That zeal had by degrees, and perhaps unconsciously to many of the parties themselves, gained all the great avenues of our social intercourse. It was manifest in almost all persons who were invested with any species of authority; whether in those who had to discharge the higher civil duties, or in those who exercised the dominion of conscience over men's minds, or in those who by the natural influence of wealth, often nobly used, commanded the just gratitude of such of their fellow-citizens as they protected, cherished, comforted, and fed. Descending lower, it ranged through that wide region of intellect which furnishes the generality of our inferior justices, our hovel attorneys, our overseers and churchwardens, and that class of men whose minds, unembarrassed by general views, and always occupied about some little local interest, readily receive a direction from above

* Planned in November 1792, by Mr. Reeves.

whenever a higher and corresponding interest is placed before them. Thus all matters of detail and management easily fell into the hands of the cabal. Under their agency, nearly the whole force and capital of every description of property became combined for the hunting down of jacobinism; or, in plain words, for the indiscriminate persecution of the lower orders, wherever a suspicion of this loose, undefinable crime existed. Through them, the overbearing haughtiness and arrogant elation of authority in low minds, swelled an hundred fold by being suffered to meddle with *state affairs*, and make the wrangles of an alehouse club part of a conspiracy against the princedoms and dominations of the world, mixed itself in all the petty details of life in which the subject in any manner comes in contact with the magistracy. In them was the execution of all the numerous restrictive laws with which the last administration was every day bruising the loins of the British people. In their hands was the dispensation of all charities which the disasters of the times drew from the never-failing spring of English humanity and virtue. From them suspicion received its tone, accusation its origin, and trial its verdict. What have the unfortunate men, many of them and their families undone for ever upon the suspicion of jacobinism, been able to oppose to this unsparing spirit? Nothing but their innocence. Innocence indeed is a good defence, for it is that without which no other is good. But is it enough by itself? Must not innocence be made evident? Must it not be made prevalent? If endangered, must it not be succoured? If injured, must it not be repaired? Can the law do this? Do we forget that law is but an instrument; that it can do no more than deliver innocence from the pursuit of malice, while

while in the way to its deliverance lie fine and imprisonment, and often contumely ten thousand times worse than death? The state pays no damages. The state grants no indemnification to thousands of wretched beings whom it ruins by its justice. To talk of acquittal, therefore, as a satisfaction for innocence, is mere idleness.

It is not to be wondered at if these causes, all of which in former periods of our history were kept under by the weight of a Whig combination and influence, should at length have brought the people to that total apathy and indifference about public concerns which no man can fail to remark at present. Indeed the heart of our country is broken. Did it beat high with liberty, as in the days when she poured forth her children under William and Marlborough to save Europe, we might not, it is true, have had such a war to try us, but never could we have had such a peace to shame us. But glory and shame are gone by for the English people! Let not, however, the authors of this greatest of all public evils, be too confident of having reached their aim. They may be assured, that there is no symptom more really alarming, because none that more strongly encourages the speculations of irregular ambition, than the lassitude and languor with which a nation used to the exercise of liberty, dismisses all consideration of its own affairs. Woe to those who conclude that a people have lost their passions only because they discover no marked affections, or discriminating sentiment, in what concerns the good or evil of their government! Wise men will not trust to the tranquillity of despair. They know that there is no dependance for the duration of any state of things longer than from day to day, unless obedience to it be carried forwards by some

active propelling principle of love or hope, where the future is brought in aid of the present, and what is desired affords a security for what is enjoyed. But despair has no prospects—no desires. If once roused from its inaction, despair will seek for change, not for the sake of preserving, but for that of destroying; not for any good to be acquired, but from a prodigal contempt, and restless loathing of what is in its own possession. This is the very state in which a people is most open to the debauchery of experiment, because despair has a downward tendency in all things, and by the unalterable law of Nature, never can reascend to hope; because the mind in which hope is dead is delivered over to the first impulse that may be at hand to seize upon it, and wandering ever after without plan or guide, and cast off from every tie of country, becomes a sure recruit for enterprise, or a terrible confederate for revenge.

Monarchs, therefore, have other evils to dread besides the effervescence of a popular spirit; and those are mischievous empirics as well as false counsellors, who, in the present state of the world, would medicine them to sleep in the arms of despotism. Let the present Ministers (to whom no such intentions are attributed) ponder seriously the state of Ireland, and reflect upon the long catalogue of unwise measures which have led to it. It is well to have as a study even the distortions of a well-proportioned body. Ireland in 1792 was full of popular discontents; and Ireland had cause for them. If war was good to repress the beginnings of jacobinism with us, war must have been, by parity of reason, better still, in a view of putting an end to its matured action in Ireland. Has it done so? Has not the war, on the contrary, augmented under our eyes every one of the ori-

ginal causes which have been so long at work to separate us? Let them ask their own friends, What has Ireland gained by the war? Martial law. What called for martial law? Rebellion. What led to rebellion? Indifference first, and then hatred to British connexion. It is true, that here oppression has not borne so heavily upon the people, and our discontents have not the harsh features of those which have prevailed in Ireland. The war has made no rebels in England; but by loosing the people from their old ties, and rendering it a matter of indifference to them how Government is carried on, let those who govern us weigh maturely, whether the war has not done some of the worst work of rebellion; and done it more effectually than rebellion could have hoped for through its own means.

My next motion was for the insertion of the following words in the Address:—“ Trusting “ that your Majesty will employ every means of “ negotiation, consistent with the honour and “ safety of this country, to avert the calamities “ of war.”

My motive in this instance is too obvious to require explanation; and I think it less necessary to dwell much on this subject, because, with respect to the desirableness of peace at all times, and more particularly in the present, I have reason to believe that your sentiments do not differ from mine. If we look to the country where the cause of war was said principally to originate, the situation of the United Provinces appeared to me to furnish abundance of prudential arguments in favour of peace. If we looked to Ireland, I saw nothing there that would not discourage a wise statesman from putting the connexion between the two kingdoms to an unnecessary hazard. At home, if it be true that there are seeds of discontent, war is the hot-bed in which these seeds will soonest vegetate; and of all wars, in this point of view, that war is most to be dreaded, in the cause of which kings may be supposed to be more concerned than their subjects.

I wished, therefore, most earnestly for peace; and experience had taught me, that the voice even of a minority in the House of Commons, might not be wholly without effect, in deterring the King's Ministers from irrational projects of war. Even upon this occasion, if I had been more supported, I am persuaded our chance of preserving the blessings of peace would be better than it appears to be at present.

R E S U L T S.

The two points to be here noticed relate to Holland and Ireland. A statement of results in this as well as in every other circumstance of Mr. Fox's reasoning, will be the best proof of its truth.

These are, simply and shortly, that the character in which each of the countries of Holland and Ireland stood towards Great Britain before the war, has been completely destroyed by the war.

I.

With regard to Holland, the present state of our relations with that republic requires no explanation; and as to the future, surely no man is sanguine enough to expect that we shall ever recover our old connexions with her, or that if we could, we should be able to derive the same benefit from them we did formerly in a view to the general security of Europe. The question now is, Whether the interest we had in preserving those connexions was not a powerful motive for preferring negotiation to war, at the period of Mr. Fox's second motion?

After the battle of Jemappe, and the absolute silence of Holland with regard to any demand of succour from us, one of these two conclusions appeared to be plain; either that Holland did not conceive herself to be in danger, or that she was favourably disposed towards France. In the former of these cases, negotiation must have been right in order to bring out the real designs of France, and disclose to Holland the extent and nearness of her danger; and in the latter supposition, not to negotiate seems to have been next to insanity,

insanity, since war (as it has but too fatally proved) put those who were in the French interest into the only possible state in which they could have an opportunity of giving effect to their purposes.

From the course which was adopted, however, not only Holland could obtain no information for herself with respect to the intentions of France, but we seem scornfully to have disdained the acquisition of any for ourselves. Dates, in affairs of this nature, are of great importance. It is a singular fact, that deeply as this country was interested in the fate of Holland, not one word either of explanation or remonstrance passed between our Ministers and France, until the 27th of December 1792; when M. Chauvelin himself was the first to bring forward a question respecting the affairs of that country. It is said there was no regular intercourse between the two countries. Whose fault was that? M. Chauvelin was upon the spot, ready to give the Ministers any explanation they might desire; and if they did not choose to acknowledge him as a regular minister, they might still have conferred with him upon the pretensions of France as easily and as fully as they could and did afterwards in the unofficial discussions which took place between the 27th of December and the time they sent him out of the kingdom. But let us look into these dates a little further. The battle of Jemappe was fought on the 6th of November; and it was then that Mr. Pitt, as it appears from a curious slate document produced by him in the debate upon the rejection of Bonaparte's overtures*, first began to be alarmed for the safety of Holland. On the 19th

* February 1800.

of November, that is, thirteen days after the battle of Jemappe, M. Chauvelin, in consequence of special instructions from his own Government, requested in the most pressing and urgent terms to be admitted to a conference with Lord Grenville*. What was the answer? Almost a refusal. After taking three days to consider whether in this most important crisis the French Minister was fit even to be heard upon the subject of his instructions, Lord Grenville informs him, that before he can answer his application, he must know the object of the conference demanded †. On whose side was the difficulty here? The battle of Jemappe had been fought; the order to pursue the Austrians into neutral territory had been issued; the memorial of Lord Auckland, in which the uneasiness of our Cabinet in consequence of the near approach of French armies is pointedly expressed to the States General, had already been presented ‡ at the Hague; yet these, the most urgent motives surely for bringing France to an explanation, appear by Lord Grenville's answer to have been the very reasons which made him refuse to see M. Chauvelin; for he particularly tells him, that before he can answer his note he must, "*under the present circumstances,*" desire him to explain why he seeks a conference. On the 28th, however, Lord Grenville graciously condescends to inform M. Chauvelin, that, all things considered, he "*will not refuse this conference.*" What passed in it has never been stated; its object must in a great measure have been lost during the nine days Ministers took to consider whether they should hear what the French Government had to

* State Papers, by Debrett, vol. i. p. 218.

† Ibid. p. 219.

‡ On the 16th November 1792.

say. Now what are we to think of men who, having in their possession intelligence of events which, by their own acknowledgment, gave them their first alarms for Holland, and which they knew must, if unexplained, tend directly to a war, rejected, during this critical period, a frank overture to an explanation which, for any thing that appeared to the contrary, might have ended in a satisfactory settlement of all differences? Certainly, whatever may be thought of the vigour of this step, much will not be said in favour of its conciliation; and still less against the natural conclusion, either that Ministers were resolved on war at any rate, or that pride had disordered their understandings.

Until the 27th of December, however, nothing, as far as the public has been made acquainted with these transactions, appears to have passed between Great Britain and France concerning Holland. On that day M. Chauvelin sent a note to Lord Grenville, which had been transmitted to him by the French Government, wherein, among other explanations offered, it is declared, “that France “will not attack Holland so long as Holland “shall preserve an exact neutrality.” But as the decree for opening the Scheldt appeared to contradict this engagement, that point is brought forward and argued in the note, under the idea, right or wrong, of its being possible to reconcile the decree with their professions of peace. That the reasoning of the French Government on this point was satisfactory, no man will contend; but the question is, first, whether on their part the determination was final; and secondly, whether our answer was sufficiently distinct and full, both with respect to the Scheldt, and the other interests of Holland, as to shew France that war must infallibly

bly ensue *on account of Holland*, unless they consented to our demands? It was the more the duty of our Ministers to bring forward some definite terms of their own, as the declaration of France was not in answer to any remonstrance from us, but voluntary on their side, and offered in anticipation of complaints which they felt we had a right to make. In effect, Holland and France, the countries at this period most directly interested, were in the most extraordinary situation that ever two countries had been placed in before, namely, that of being perfectly in the dark respecting the relations in which they were to stand towards each other. Their destiny upon this point was in Mr. Pitt's hands, who had taken upon himself to determine for *France* what should constitute an act of aggression upon Holland, and to determine for *Holland* what should not be a satisfaction for that aggression. He would not allow Holland to negotiate directly for herself concerning the points in dispute, and he would not acquaint France by what concessions those points might be adjusted.

II.

That the relation in which Ireland stood towards Great Britain before the war is also annihilated, must be confessed even by those who maintain that it has given place to a better. Mr. Fox's words in this place are remarkable :—“ If “ we look to Ireland, I saw nothing there that “ would not discourage a wise statesman from “ putting *the connexion between the two kingdoms* “ to any unnecessary hazard.”

The connexion was put to hazard; the connexion, as it then stood, is dissolved; and dissolved by the Minister himself in consequence

of his being compelled, through a rebellion, to recognise the existence of that very “*bazard*,” the approach of which Mr. Fox had so unsuccessfully deprecated.

The connexion between Great Britain and Ireland was that of two independent kingdoms governed by the same King. Ireland, since 1782, was a government by express compact. It was a government capable, through the organ of a popular representation, of reforming from time to time its own abuses. Such was its general construction, and such were its means. By the Union, Ireland has lost both.

No reasoning in favour of the Union can alter this fact. The Union may be the wisest of measures, but the fact of the total destruction of the connexion as it stood under the compact *between the two kingdoms*, cannot be denied. It is not fair to answer, that the connexion between the *two islands* is strengthened by the dissolution of it in the form in which it had existed previously between the *two kingdoms*. This is the very question in dispute, and until it be settled, we have experience for the old connexion, and nothing but chance for the new.

But what occasioned the dissolution of the old connexion? What say the authors of it? The absolute impossibility, in consequence of the combination between the discontented in Ireland and the common enemy, of otherwise preserving any connexion at all. To keep this discontent under, it became necessary, according to the phrase of the day, “to concentrate the forces of the ‘British empire,’ in order that a vigorous executive, one and indivisible, should be created to pervade with equal facility all the limbs of the political body, exempt from all other control except

except that of an Imperial Parliament. For this purpose the compact between the King and People of Ireland was dissolved; the People of Ireland declared incapable of forming a separate state; and the system of Union devised and carried into effect.

Such is the short history of the Union taken as a fact. It may turn out, as before observed, a wise and beneficial contrivance; or it may totally alienate the hearts and minds of the Irish people; but in point of *fact*, it *is* a measure of necessity and not of choice. Necessity in all changes of government implies the predominance of some evil. That evil was foreseen by Mr. Fox, but pointed out by him, in vain, to the House of Commons.

I come now to my third motion, “ That an humble address be presented to his Majesty, “ that his Majesty will be graciously pleased to give directions, that a Minister may be sent to Paris, to treat with those persons who exercise provisionally the functions of executive government in France, touching such points as may be in discussion between his Majesty and his Allies, and the French Nation;” which, if I am rightly informed, is that which has been most generally disapproved. It was made upon mature consideration, after much deliberation with myself, and much consultation with others; and notwithstanding the various misrepresentations of my motives in making it, and the misconceptions of its tendency, which have prepossessed many against it, I cannot repent of an act, which if I had omitted, I should think myself deficient in the duty which I owe to you, and to my country at large.

The motives which urged me to make it were, the same desire of peace which actuated me in the former motion, if it could be preserved on honourable and safe terms; and if this were impossible, an anxious wish that the grounds of war might be just, clear, and intelligible.

If we or our ally have suffered injury or insult, or if the independence of Europe be menaced by inordinate and successful ambition, I know no

means of preserving peace but by obtaining reparation for the injury, satisfaction for the insult, or security against the design, which we apprehend ; and I know no means of obtaining any of these objects but by addressing ourselves to the Power of whom we complain.

If the exclusive navigation of the Scheldt, or any other right belonging to the States General, has been invaded, the French Executive Council are the invaders, and of them we must ask redress. If the rights of neutral nations have been attacked by the decree of the 19th of November, the National Convention of France have attacked them, and from that Convention, through the organ by which they speak to foreign courts and nations, their Minister for Foreign Affairs, we must demand explanation, disavowal, or such other satisfaction as the case may require. If the manner in which the same Convention have received and answered some of our countrymen who have addressed them, be thought worthy notice, precisely of the same persons, and in the same manner, must we demand satisfaction upon that head also. If the security of Europe, by any conquests made or apprehended, be endangered to such a degree as to warrant us, on the principles as well of justice as of policy, to enforce by arms a restitution of conquests already made, or a renunciation of such as may have been projected, from the Executive Power of France in this instance again must we ask such restitution or such renunciation.

renunciation. How all, or any of these objects could be attained but by negotiation carried on by authorized Ministers, I could not conceive. I knew, indeed, that there were some persons whose notions of dignity were far different from mine, and who, in that point of view, would have preferred a clandestine, to an avowed negotiation; but I confess I thought this mode of proceeding neither honourable nor safe; and, with regard to some of our complaints, wholly impracticable.—Not honourable, because to seek private and circuitous channels of communication, seems to suit the conduct, rather of such as sue for a favour, than of a great nation which demands satisfaction. Not safe, because neither a declaration from an unauthorized agent, nor a mere gratuitous repeal of the decrees complained of, (and what more could such a negotiation aim at?) would afford us any security against the revival of the claims which we oppose; and lastly, impracticable with respect to that part of the question which regards the security of Europe, because such security could not be provided for by the repeal of a decree, or any thing that might be the result of a private negotiation, but could only be obtained by a formal treaty, to which the existing French government must of necessity be a party; and I know of no means by which it can become a party to such a treaty, or to any treaty at all, but by a Minister publicly authorized,

authorized, and publicly received. Upon these grounds, and with these views, as a sincere friend to peace, I thought it my duty to suggest, what appeared to me, on every supposition, the most eligible, and, if certain points were to be insisted upon, the only means of preserving that invaluable blessing.

But I had still a further motive ; and if peace could not be preserved, I considered the measure which I recommended as highly useful in another point of view. To declare war is, by the Constitution, the prerogative of the King ; but to grant or withhold the means of carrying it on, is (by the same Constitution) the privilege of the People, through their Representatives ; and upon the People at large, by a law paramount to all Constitutions—the Law of Nature and Necessity, must fall the burdens and sufferings, which are the too sure attendants upon that calamity. It seems therefore reasonable, that they, who are to pay and to suffer, should be distinctly informed of the object for which war is made, and I conceived nothing would tend to this information so much as an avowed negotiation ; because from the result of such a negotiation, and by no other means, could we, with any degree of certainty, learn, how far the French were willing to satisfy us in all, or any of the points, which have been publicly held forth as the grounds of complaint against them.—If in none of these any satisfactory

tory explanation were given, we should all admit, provided our original grounds of complaint were just, that the war would be so too :—if in some— we should know the specific subjects upon which satisfaction was refused, and have an opportunity of judging whether or not they were a rational ground of dispute :—if in all—and a rupture were nevertheless to take place, we should know that the public pretences were not the real causes of the war.

In the last case which I have put, I should hope there is too much spirit in the people of Great Britain, to submit to take a part in a proceeding founded on deceit ; and in either of the others, whether our cause were weak or strong, we should at all events escape that last of infamies, the suspicion of being a party to the Duke of Brunswick's Manifestoes *. But this is not all. Having ascertained the precise cause of war, we should learn the true road to peace ; and if the

* I have heard that the Manifestoes are not to be considered as the acts of the illustrious Prince whose name I have mentioned, and that the threats contained in them were never meant to be carried into execution. I hear with great satisfaction whatever tends to palliate the Manifestoes themselves ; and with still more any thing that tends to disconnect them from the name which is affixed to them, because the great abilities of the person in question, his extraordinary gallantry, and, above all, his mild and paternal government of his subjects, have long since impressed me with the highest respect for his character ; and upon this account it gave me much concern when I heard that he was engaged in an enterprise, where, according to my ideas, true glory could not be acquired.

cause so ascertained appeared adequate, then we should look for peace through war, by vigorous exertions and liberal supplies: if inadequate, the Constitution would furnish us abundance of means, as well through our representatives, as by our undoubted right to petition King and Parliament, of impressing his Majesty's Ministers with sentiments similar to our own, and of engaging them to compromise, or, if necessary, to relinquish an object in which we did not feel interest sufficient to compensate us for the calamities and hazard of a war.

To these reasonings it appeared to me, that they only could object with consistency, who would go to war with France on account of her internal concerns; and who would consider the re-establishment of the old, or at least some other form of government, as the fair object of the contest. Such persons might reasonably enough argue, that with those whom they are determined to destroy, it is useless to treat.*

To arguments of this nature, however, I paid little attention; because the eccentric opinion upon which they are founded was expressly disavowed, both in the King's Speech and in the Addresses of the two Houses of Parliament; and it was an additional motive with me for making my motion, that, if fairly debated, it might be the occasion of bringing into free discussion that opinion, and of separating more distinctly those

who maintained and acted upon it from others, who from different motives (whatever they might be) were disinclined to my proposal.

But if the objections of the violent party appeared to me extravagant, those of the more moderate seemed wholly unintelligible. Would they make and continue war till they can force France to a counter-revolution? No; this they disclaim. What then is to be the termination of the war to which they would excite us? I answer confidently, that it can be no other than a negotiation upon the same principles and with the same men as that which I recommend. I say the same principles, because after war peace cannot be obtained but by treaty, and treaty necessarily implies the independency of the contracting parties. I say the same men, because though they *may* be changed before the happy hour of reconciliation arrives, yet that change, upon the principles above stated, would be merely accidental, and in no wise a necessary preliminary to peace; for I cannot suppose, that they who disclaim making war *for* a change, would yet think it right to continue it *till* a change; or, in other words, that the blood and treasure of this country should be expended in a hope that—not our efforts—but time and chance may produce a new government in France, with which it would be more agreeable to our Ministers to negotiate than with the present. And it is further to be observed, that the necessity of such

such a negotiation will not in any degree depend upon the success of our arms, since the reciprocal recognition of the independency of contracting parties is equally necessary to those who exact and to those who offer sacrifices for the purpose of peace. I forbear to put the case of ill success, because to contemplate the situation to which we, and especially our ally, might in such an event be placed, is a task too painful to be undertaken but in a case of the last necessity. Let us suppose, therefore, the skill and gallantry of our sailors and soldiers to be crowned with a series of uninterrupted victories, and those victories to lead us to the legitimate object of a just war, a safe and honourable peace. The terms of such a peace (I am supposing that Great Britain is to dictate them) may consist in satisfaction, restitution, or even by way of indemnity to us or to others, in cession of territory on the part of France. Now that such satisfaction may be honourable, it must be made by an avowed Minister; that such restitution or cession may be safe or honourable, they must be made by an independent power, competent to make them. And thus our very successes and victories will necessarily lead us to that measure of negotiation and recognition, which from the distorted shape in which passion and prejudice represent objects to the mind of man, has by some been considered as an act of humiliation and abasement.

I have reason to believe there are some who think my motion unexceptionable enough in itself, but ill-timed. The time was not in my choice. I had no opportunity of making it sooner; and, with a view to its operation respecting peace, I could not delay it. To me, who think that public intercourse with France, except during actual war, ought always to subsist, the first occasion that presented itself, after the interruption of that intercourse, seemed of course the proper moment for pressing its renewal. But let us examine the objections upon this head of time in detail. They appeared to me to be principally four :

1st. That by sending a minister to Paris at that period, we should give some countenance to a proceeding *, most unanimously and most justly reprobated, in every country of Europe.

To this objection I need not, I think, give any other answer, than that it rests upon an opinion, that by sending a minister we pay some compliment, implying approbation, to the prince or state to whom we send him; an opinion which,

* Since this was written, we have learned the sad catastrophe of the proceeding to which I allude. Those, however, who feel the force of my argument, will perceive that it is not at all impaired by this revolting act of cruelty and injustice. Indeed, if I were inclined to see any connexion between the two subjects, I should rather feel additional regret for the rejection of a motion which might have afforded one chance more of preventing an act concerning which (out of France) I will venture to affirm that there is not throughout Europe one dissentient voice.

for the honour of this country, I must hope to be wholly erroneous. We had a minister at Versailles, when Corsica was bought and enslaved. We had ministers at the German courts, at the time of the infamous partition of Poland. We have generally a resident Consul, who acts as a minister to the piratical republic of Algiers; and we have more than once sent embassies to Emperors of Morocco, reeking from the blood through which, by the murder of their nearest relations, they had waded to their thrones. In none of these instances was any sanction given by Great Britain to the transactions by which power had been acquired, or to the manner in which it had been exercised.

2dly. That a recognition might more properly take place at the end, and as the result of a private communication, and (in the phrase used upon a former occasion) as the price of peace, than gratuitously at the outset of a negotiation.

I cannot help suspecting, that they who urge this objection have confounded the present case with the question, formerly so much agitated, of American Independence. In this view they appear to me wholly dissimilar—I pray to God that, in all other respects, they may prove equally so. To recognise the Thirteen States, was in effect to withdraw a claim of our own, and it might fairly enough be argued that we were entitled to some price or compensation for such a

sacrifice. Even upon that occasion, I was of opinion that a gratuitous and preliminary acknowledgment of their independence was most consonant to the principles of magnanimity and policy ; but in this instance we have no sacrifice to make, for we have no claim ; and the reasons for which the French must wish an avowed and official intercourse, can be only such as apply equally to the mutual interest of both nations, by affording more effectual means of preventing misunderstandings, and securing peace.

I would further recommend to those who press this objection, to consider whether, if recognition be really a sacrifice on our part, the Ministry have not already made that sacrifice by continuing to act upon the commercial treaty as a treaty still in force. Every contract must be at an end when the contracting parties have no longer any existence either in their own persons or by their representatives. After the 10th of August the political existence of Louis XVI. who was the contracting party in the treaty of commerce, was completely annihilated. The only question therefore is, Whether the Executive Council of France did or did not represent the political power so annihilated? If we say they did not, the contracting party has no longer any political existence either in his person or by representation, and the treaty becomes null and void. If we say they did, then we have actually acknowledged them as representatives

atives (for the time at least) of what was the Executive Government in France. In this character alone do they claim to be acknowledged, since their very style describes them as a Provisional Executive Council, and nothing else. If we would preserve our treaty we could not do less; by sending a minister we should not do more*.

3dly. That our Ambassador having been recalled, and no British Minister having resided at Paris, while the conduct of the French was inoffensive with respect to us and our ally, it would be mortifying to send one thither, just at the time when they began to give us cause of complaint.

Mortifying to whom? Not certainly to the House of Commons, who were not a party to the recall of Lord Gower, and who, if my advice were followed, would lose no time in replacing him. To the Ministers possibly †; and if so, it ought to be a warning to the House, that it should

* If my argument is satisfactory, I have proved that we have recognised the Executive Council; and it is notorious, that through the medium of Mr. Chauvelin we have negotiated with them. But although we had both negotiated and recognised, it would be dishonourable, it seems, to negotiate in such a manner as to imply recognition. How nice are the points upon which great businesses turn! How remote from vulgar apprehension!

† I do not think it would have been mortifying even to them, because in consequence of the discussions which had arisen, a measure which had been before indifferent might become expedient; but as this point made no part of my consideration, I have not thought it incumbent upon me to argue it.

not, by acting like the Ministers, lose the proper, that is, the first opportunity, and thereby throw extrinsic difficulties of its own creation in the way of a measure in itself wise and salutary.

4thly. That by acting in the manner proposed, we might give ground of offence to those powers, with whom, in case of war, it might be prudent to form connexion and alliance.

This objection requires examination. Is it meant that our treating with France in its present state will offend the German powers, by shewing them that our ground of quarrel is different from theirs? If this be so, and if we adhere to the principles which we have publicly stated, I am afraid we must either offend or deceive; and in such an alternative I trust the option is not difficult.

If it be said, that, though our original grounds of quarrel were different, yet we may, in return for the aid they may afford us in obtaining our objects, assist them in theirs of a counter-revolution, and enter into an offensive alliance for that purpose—I answer, that our having previously treated would be no impediment to such a measure. But if it were, I freely confess that this consideration would have no influence with me: because such an alliance, for such a purpose, I conceive to be the greatest calamity that can befall the British nation: for let us not attempt to deceive ourselves; whatever possibility or even probability

bility there may be of a counter-revolution, from internal agitation and discord, the means of producing such an event by external force can be no other than the conquest of France. The conquest of France!!!—O calumniated crusaders, how rational and moderate were your objects!—O much-injured Louis XIV. upon what slight grounds have you been accused of restless and immoderate ambition!—O tame and feeble Cervantes, with what a timid pencil and faint colours have you painted the portrait of a disordered imagination!

I have now stated to you fully, and I trust fairly, the arguments that persuaded me to the course of conduct which I have pursued. In these consists my defence, upon which you are to pronounce; and I hope I shall not be thought presumptuous, when I say, that I expect with confidence a favourable verdict.

If the reasons which I have adduced fail of convincing you, I confess indeed that I shall be disappointed, because to my understanding they appear to have more of irrefragable demonstration than can often be hoped for in political discussions; but even in this case, if you see in them probability sufficient to induce you to believe that, though not strong enough to convince *you*, they, and not any sinister or oblique motives, did in fact actuate *me*, I have still gained my cause; for in this supposition, though the propriety of my conduct

may be doubted, the rectitude of my intentions must be admitted.

Knowing, therefore, the justice and candour of the tribunal to which I have appealed, I wait your decision without fear—your approbation I anxiously desire, but your acquittal I confidently expect.

Pitied for my supposed misconduct by some of my friends, openly renounced by others, attacked and misrepresented by my enemies—to you I have recourse for refuge and protection: and conscious, that if I had shrunk from my duty, I should have merited your censure, I feel myself equally certain, that by acting in conformity to the motives which I have explained to you, I can in no degree have forfeited the esteem of the city of Westminster, which it has so long been the first pride of my life to enjoy, and which it shall be my constant endeavour to preserve.

C. J. FOX.

South Street,
Jan. 26, 1793.

R E S U L T S.

If it was once generally the fashion to doubt the wisdom and the soundness of the foregoing arguments, it will be confessed that we have now full proof of the value of those by which they were opposed. We have reached at length the great sum and result of all our ambitious calculations, of all our proud intolerance, of all our fierce disdain. The Sovereign of the United Kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland has sworn a peace at Amiens with the First Consul of the French Republic, ONE AND INDIVISIBLE.

Upon reading the Treaty, our attention is first called to circumstances of Comparison. We are obviously struck by the difference in the Governments, Limits, and Connexions of the several states of Europe as now settled, and acquiesced in by us, compared with those Governments, Limits, and Connexions, as they stood in 1792. In this there will be found a difference of fact considerably to the advantage of the peace Mr. Fox wished us to keep, over that which has just been concluded. So far there will be no dispute. The question is, Who are to blame? Who are the men whose conduct has laid them under the necessity of accounting to the public for the difference between the advantages specified in the Treaty now before us, and those we might have continued to enjoy had Europe remained in her ancient state? Are the late Ministers to blame? Are the present? Is Mr. Fox? Or is any body to blame?

A reflection arising out of the character given to the peace by its makers, will considerably assist us in this inquiry. They call it an "advan-

"tageous" peace. Its pretensions to this title, or its merits in a variety of other respects, are not now to be discussed; the subject, however, as far as we are called upon to approve or condemn the peace, is one on which there must be no equivocation. By what title, then, do the supporters of the war call the peace advantageous? Those who uniformly opposed the war, and who attribute to the false principles in which it began, and the obstinacy with which they were persisted in, all the calamities with which we have been so long afflicted, may fairly call that peace "advantageous" which delivers us from such a war, even upon the terms just agreed to. But how those who deny such to have been the character of the war, who approve the conduct which produced it, who thought that the relative state we were in with regard to France in 1792, was not advantageous enough in the comparison to induce us to make the sacrifices supposed to be involved in a direct negotiation to avoid it; how persons who hold these opinions can call the peace "advantageous," is, indeed, difficult to comprehend. The original opposers of the war accept the peace, in regard to its terms, as matter, if not of the very last, yet of great and pressing necessity. The makers of the peace deny this necessity in every sense, and contend in favour of the terms as matter of choice. Granting this, they must have had some rule to govern that choice. What rule? The relative state of Europe when they made the peace. Now if instead of the present relative state of Europe, Ministers could have had that in which Europe stood in 1792 to refer to for their choice, would they have accepted the same terms? Clearly not. The Ministers, therefore, who accepted these terms as matter of choice, at least must admit their choice to have been determined by

by a necessity arising out of the difference between the state of Europe now, and the state of Europe in 1792. But who is responsible for this necessity? Is it the Man whose proposal was rejected, or is it the Minister whose measure was adopted? Is it the Man who advised negotiation then, upon principles to which the makers of peace are compelled to resort now; or is it the Minister who disclaimed those principles, under whose conduct of the negotiation war commenced, and through whom, consequently, that necessity arose which has governed the terms of the peace just concluded?

Three points then are to be considered, in order to decide fairly this great question of responsibility. Did the late Ministers in 1792 negotiate in the spirit of peace or not? When negotiation failed, did they render the grounds on which they went to war, distinct and intelligible? And, is it, or is it not, to their having rested the war on grounds perfectly the reverse of distinct or intelligible, that the present condition of Europe is owing?

To the first of these questions it may be answered, that independently of the hostile mind discoverable throughout the whole of the discussions with M. Chauvelin, that principle of negotiation never can be deemed pacific which not only refuses to declare with what concessions from an adversary it will be content, but keeps back a fundamental objection of title to all he may grant. This reasoning will apply to every part of the transactions with M. Chauvelin; but what places its truth beyond all doubt, is the conduct of Ministers themselves, when they wanted to convince the public of their anxiety to *restore* peace. In 1792 they acknowledged that it was

an essential point to avoid any recognition of the republic ; but if in 1796 when they sent Lord Malmesbury to Paris, no improvement in the state of our affairs had happened to make it less so, it follows from the very circumstance of their abandoning it, that although they might still consider it an essential point to maintain, they also considered it an essential obstacle to negotiation. In 1792 they could not be persuaded to state distinctly to France on what conditions they would consent to remain at peace ; but if in 1796 they found it expedient to send over a detailed *projet*, it follows equally, that they must have been convinced a want of distinctness in stating their terms of peace would prove an obstacle to the restoration of it. And here it is impossible not to remark with what singular propriety, in a view to distant events, Mr. Fox's third motion was framed ; since, if it be true, as Ministers themselves acknowledged by their two negotiations, that it was right to make the people of England clearly understand the terms for which war was to be continued, it is conclusive that they ought to have had the means of clearly knowing at the outset the terms to obtain which war had been undertaken. A compliance with the motion would have afforded them those means.

To illustrate this proposition fully, and in so doing, to include the second of the above inquiries, namely, Whether Ministers, when negotiation failed, made their grounds of war distinct and intelligible, we have but to pursue the history, and mark the fate, of this much-agitated question of recognition. It will then be seen that by whatever title the peace of Amiens may claim to be distinguished, Ministers, to obtain it, have been obliged to walk in the very steps Mr. Fox recommended

mended to their predecessors. They have recognised this republic, as a preliminary. They have recognised it to gain and secure what they wanted. They have recognised it as a revolution in the state of France, which they had no right to obstruct ; and in doing this, we may assume that they disclaim and deny for themselves what Mr. Fox has disclaimed and denied for himself from first to last, namely, any sanction of those atrocious and criminal acts which accompanied the establishment of what is recognised.

When Mr. Fox made this motion, the House of Commons, if we may judge from its debates, was scarcely in a temper of mind to form to itself clear or rational ideas on any subject. Ministers were in no better. The counsels of neither displayed any thing that deserves the character of a prospective policy. The point to which all their deliberations tended, was to avoid recognition. They affected at the same time as great an anxiety for peace as the Opposition. It was said to be practicable to secure the benefits of peace through the medium of an unauthorized negotiation, and wise to keep our pure hands from being soiled by the touch of Jacobin vice and wickedness. It was argued, that by so conducting ourselves, we should avoid tying up our hands, and should be able to join the continental confederacy or not, as events might render expedient. The wisdom of proceeding thus was further recommended by the facility with which, if ever we should become embarked in hostilities, we could either advance or retreat. If the confederacy should be successful, by declaring that our objects were the same with those of the other powers, we might reasonably demand our share of the gains. If unsuccessful, we might deny our having had any other object

than that of simply repelling an attack. If the Bourbons should be restored in the scramble, we had a claim upon their gratitude for having recalled Lord Gower, refused M. Chauvelin's credentials, and joined the common cause of sovereigns in their favour ; and it was hoped, that that illustrious House would understand and appreciate a policy by which a Minister who had to deal with a vigilant popular assembly declined the formality of an accession to treaties of which he was executing the purposes. If the Republic should prove triumphant, we were equally entitled to the praise of Frenchmen for having stood aloof from the avowed object of making war to restore their kings ; while to the emigrants and royalists we should be able to say, what in fact we tell them at this moment, that our promises to them had been unhappily interpreted more according to their own sanguine wishes than to the true purport and meaning of the terms in which they had been conveyed.

Wonders were expected from these cunning measures. To be right either way in a situation full of so many real difficulties was captivating to the common mass of which mankind is composed. The weak were seduced by its plausibility. The wise were duped by their own passions. All finally consented to act upon that view of our affairs which Mr. Pitt had presented them, and of which his handy phrase of “ EXISTING CIR-
“ CUMSTANCES ” is alone adequate to the description.

We began thus by what was thought at the time a dexterous avoidance of all positive engagement as to the manner in which we should deal with the Republic ultimately. This was a great convenience to Ministers, but at the same time it

was one which they purchased by the sacrifice of a greater ; for if ever there was a moment which in point of prudence as well as justice called for system in all things, system in our domestic union, system in our foreign arrangements, explicit declarations to which the timid might trust, and by which the doubtful might be fixed, it surely was the moment in which Great Britain had determined in what character she should stand forth to the world in the most tremendous crisis it had ever witnessed. Her Ministers judged differently. Their scheme of “ Existing Circumstances ” was one with which nothing that implied durability could be associated.

The effects in a general point of view of thus rejecting every permanent tie, and every binding principle, will be more properly considered hereafter. What is to be remarked at present is the way in which it bore upon the question of recognition. On this point it soon became evident, that nothing to which Ministers had pledged themselves could be depended upon for two days together. When they really wanted something from France, they made no difficulty in recognising the competency of her government to give it them. In the first campaign the allies were successful. So were they at the beginning of the second. Then came sad reverses—the defeats in Alsace, the second conquest of the Netherlands, and the loss of Holland. Ministers by this time began to find that they had been in an error with regard to the strength of their enemy. It became, therefore, highly necessary for them to consider, although without opening any immediate prospects, in what way peace was to be made if the war should prove decidedly hopeless. Defeat was their instructor. On the debate upon the

King's speech at the opening of the second session of 1794, some of the close confidential friends of Mr. Pitt began to discover that there was nothing in this France which ought to preclude the recognition of her government, provided she would give us such terms as we had a right to expect. This truth had burst in such a flood of day over Mr. Wilberforce, that in his zeal to give effect to it, he stepped before the Opposition, and moved a pacific amendment himself to the Minister's Address. Within a month of this*, Mr. Pitt, for whom the ground had been dexterously enough kept, recorded upon the journals of Parliament, that he was ready to treat "with *any Government, under whatever form, capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity.*" At the opening of the ensuing session†, he recommended his Majesty to give a pledge from the Throne to the same effect. Five months afterwards‡, he proposed, through Mr. Wickham, to open a negotiation with M. Barthélémy, at Basle; and perceiving at last that nothing was to be done in these circuitous modes, he dismissed all further ceremonies and falvos, and dispatched an authorized Minister at once to Paris§.

From this time forward to the signing of the preliminaries, looking to the rational side only, we might conclude the quarrel between us and France to have been reduced, absolutely and for ever, to a question of terms. Whether it was so or not, in point of fact, Mr. Pitt's negotiations in 1796 and 1797, and the peace just concluded, will bear the most ample testimony that can be

* January 26, 1795.
‡ March 8, 1796.

† October 29, 1795.
§ October 13, 1796.

desired to the truth of the first and fundamental principle of Mr. Fox's motion, namely, that it was by recognition alone, and through authorized ministers on both sides, that national security could be given for national engagements. Through what variety of being, through what perils and miseries have we not passed to learn the value of this truth !

Thus much for the first ground on which Mr. Fox recommended recognition. With regard to the second, namely, the right of France to give herself what form of government she pleased, as that principle was never directly denied, and is now positively recognised, little remains to be said. It is not fitting, however, that the use which the enemies of all popular government have made of what they call the Example of France, should be passed over wholly without remark. The Ministers owned, it is true, "the right of France to reform *her laws* *," nor did they pretend to limit the exercise of that right to laws with a reference to monarchical forms. They had a different use to make of what was transacting there. They did not argue from her crimes to the necessity of punishing them, but from the mischiefs of an experimental and pretended system of liberty in France, to the dangers of an established and real system of liberty in England. Upon the consequences they drew from this proposition they built the great edifice of their power. The revolution, we know, presents many aspects. One is, that of a great people resorting to original rights for the redress of fundamental grievances.—Another is, that of a series of barbarities more atrocious and more

* Vide Declaration, October 3, 1793.

disgusting than human wickedness ever crowded together within the same space of time since the beginning of the world. When Ministers, therefore, wished to argue from the example of France, it was from this side of the picture that they drew their illustrations ; and by a process of reasoning of which a calm mind is just as sure to detect the fallacy as an inflamed one is to follow in its train, the short conclusion to which they invariably came, was, that the crimes were produced by the principles. The result was natural. Many good men, of all ranks and degrees, without further inquiry, carried their just abhorrence of such crimes forward to what they imagined to be their cause, and learned to detest and abjure, not the new version alone of the Rights of Man, but those fundamental rights themselves on which all lawful government is founded, and must rest. This fallacy, and a most cruel one it is, has prevailed, to the irreparable injury of real freedom. It is a fallacy for the simple reason, were there no other, that in the proposition from whence it flows no distinction is offered between the principle and its abuse. It is no less striking as a fallacy when we enlarge our views, and reflect that, in truth, the revolution itself has never yet presented an aspect in which it was fair to argue from it as an example. It never has been before us as a whole. It never could, indeed, have been so considered without taking into our account, at one and the same moment, not only its origin and object, and its progress to establishment, but also its effects as a change upon the happiness of France. On this last point, where all the good is to come, it is possible that our hopes and our fears may not be equally balanced ; but still there are hopes ; as there ever must be while there is virtue.

virtue. At all events, let it be recollect^d, that hitherto we have passed only the two first of these stages; dreadful stages it is true, full of darkness and of death! But even here, if we are to determine like reasoners upon the revolution as an example, we must know, first, how far a cruel foreign enemy, how far the assembled representatives of all the religion, justice, and morality of the world with their whip of scorpions lashing France into madness, are not themselves more than half guilty of the crimes they reprobate. It were no easy task to separate and assign to each of the tyrannies by which the world has been desolated for so many years, its proper share of guilt and shame; yet, as fair reasoners, we must do this, and perhaps more, before pronouncing judgment, and even before we can ascertain with any precision what our own ideas are upon this point of example. We certainly can reason from it, at present, only as far as it reaches. As the act which is to furnish the example is not yet, nor can be complete, we must necessarily confine any speculation concerning it to its distinct parts. In this view, and applicable to the use which has been made of the crimes and follies of France to put Englishmen out of conceit with all popular liberty, our business here with the question of example is for the degree in which it is connected with original rights; and the good or evil purposes to which the love of those rights in ardent minds has been directed. It is not true, then, that the doctrines of the Rights of Man have been applied to bad purposes only. They were used by the first Assembly in the hope, whether absurdly or otherwise, of assimilating their constitution to the plan of our own. Afterwards they were introduced by speculative politicians in the

the construction of a new government, fundamentally erroneous because it was a scheme that rested every thing upon definition, and left nothing to sentiment and habit. They have been used as watch-words by different factions to cover different purposes ; and have caused, by their abuse in the hands of the lowest of mankind, ten thousand times more real miseries to France than ever were inflicted upon her by the worst of her kings. But if they have been thus perverted, if by having been arrogantly denied opportunity was given for their perversion, let it also never be forgotten that in the profoundest depths of despair, and almost at the last gasp of civil agony, a proud and high-minded people started up again to the sound of **ORIGINAL RIGHTS**, to drive away from their fields and their hearths the cruel armies of a confederacy, which, if it had prevailed, would have swept away every trace and vestige of liberty from the face of the earth. Here then is something of which man may be proud ! Here is an Example to be printed on the pillows of tyrants, and to live in the hearts of the just ! Here is an anchoring-ground for the revolution, when peace shall hold out to the subjects of France protection by law ; when penitence, and possibly years of suffering yet to come, shall have worn away the sharp remembrance of her crimes ; when she shall have renounced her cheerless philosophy, and grown ashamed of her barbarous anticks which have made men and angels weep !—Here is for the triumph and exultation of every Frenchman, in whatever climate, and under whatever denomination of sect or party, he pours out his pious prayer for blessings upon his native land ; from the actors in these high achievements whose blood

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has streamed for her defence, to the brave, suffering exile, who, in the deeds which exalt his countrymen to glory, will feel and recognise the sentiments through which he himself rises above misfortune !

So far as to example. On this side it may be said that Ministers only deceived our senses. There was another, however, through which they destroyed our honour. They admitted, as we have seen, *to* France, absolutely, the right of reforming her laws. They admitted *against* France the claims, as they called them, of the civilized world, to prevent that reformation *as she was setting about it*; that is, by consulting her own will only in the establishment of her own government. Between these two adverse admissions, and the adverse obligations belonging to each, Existing Circumstances, that bane of all true principle, held the balance. These gave the tone to all our state instruments and proceedings, which, in regard to the exercise of the right admitted by Ministers in words, varied according to their various success in resisting it by facts. The consequence is, that at the signing of the peace no man knows where to look for any one of the great principles for which the war was said to be carried on. They bandied about these principles until they lost them. Between the rejection of M. Chauvelin's credentials, and the reception of M. Otto's, all our opinions upon this subject seem to have passed away, or to be like the traces of some confused and mysterious dream. What is become of that law of nations, on the interpretation of which we grounded our exclusion of France from the common fellowship of states, and denied her competency to accredit a Minister in 1792? Is it slurred over? It is the same as abandoned. Does it constitute the basis of

of the present treaty ? Then we retract our first application of its principles, and confess that we were the aggressors. The dilemma is unanswerable. The shame is irrecoverable. When we made peace with America, her admission into the brotherhood of independent nations was simple and easy. We had nothing to do but to take off the weight of an acknowledged sovereignty, and America rose at once into her place. There never was a time when America did not stand in some known, understood relation towards this country. She passed, like other revolted colonies, from subjection to rebellion, and from rebellion to independence. There it ended. With France the end indeed is the same. We have recognised the republic. But how ? Upon what principle ? From what state of previous relation do we receive France into the bosom of the European system ? We received America from a state of rebellion. Was France rebel ? But either she was rebel, or she was in the exercise of her lawful rights. We must take our choice. The first alternative we disclaim. We never pretended that she was rebel to us. Was she rebel to her king ? We never by any State Act, directly ventured to say that she was, otherwise we must have acknowledged that king when we were at war with his subjects. Then it follows that France was, and never has ceased to be, in the exercise of her undoubted rights. So says reason. Reason calls upon those who, denying that France was in the exercise of her lawful rights when she accredited M. Chauvelin, admit her, notwithstanding, to have been so when she accredited M. Otto, to shew when, and through what circumstances she came by those rights ; in what happy spot she passed the boundaries of the two empires of anarchy and order. But in this as in every other particular

of their conduct, Ministers acted by a rule of their own. It was one day the law of nations. The next it was the law of convenience. First they recall Lord Gower, and deny the existence of any lawful authority in France. On the death of Louis the Sixteenth, they consider the French monarchy as in abeyance, until a lucky hit in the war, which puts them in possession of Toulon, forces them to recognise his son, and to issue proclamations in his name. But Louis the Seventeenth is a minor, and by the laws and constitution of the monarchy, under the guardianship of Monsieur, the King's brother, become by his death regent of France. By a whimsical inconsistency they acknowledge the minor, but will hear nothing of the guardian. On the death of Louis the Seventeenth, the title to the crown devolving to the regent his uncle, they decline recognising him. Now, therefore, they recognise no power either in France or out of it; they refuse to recognise the republic, because the King is at Verona, and they refuse to recognise the King, because the republic is at Paris. To make these odds all even, they send Lord Macartney to Louis the Eighteenth, to half-recognise the monarchy, while they keep the other unrecognised moiety of France to be used according to existing circumstances. This humour indeed does not last long; for, proceeding to the islands of Noirmoutier and Belleisle, they proclaim Louis the Eighteenth entire, and summon the inhabitants to surrender to him, "*their lawful Sovereign.*" When all these attempts fail, as no wonder they should, undertaken upon such principles, we are bid to limit our views in regard to the internal state of France, to that of establishing there "*a government capable of maintaining the accus-*

"tomed relations of peace and amity." In this jargon, Parliament is told there is a way out of all difficulties ; and accordingly Lord Malmesbury is sent to Paris, to renounce Louis the Eighteenth, and negotiate upon terms of equality between the Sovereign King of England and the Sovereign People of France. He fails. The sovereign people, de-recognised once more, fall back into their ranks, and become again a ferocious horde of regicides, atheists, and robbers. Fresh difficulties at home in the following year, produce a second embassy. This too fails. Regicides ! Atheists ! Robbers again ! They are told, however, in somewhat of a lower key, that the way to deserve the character of plain, well-meaning republicans, is to let us keep the Cape and Ceylon ; and in this state things remain until General Bonaparte, in answer to a civil message desiring to treat for a peace, is told that he is an usurper ; that the lawful authority is in the princes of the Bourbon family,—that very family whom Lord Malmesbury had twice solemnly renounced in the name of his master ! The consequence of this strange confusion of all ideas and principles, is, that to save the wretched remnant of our credit, our negotiator at Amiens was compelled to sink in silence and everlasting night every syllable we had ever uttered to justify our application of the principles of order, law, morality, and religion, to the non-recognition of the French republic. We are most happy in knowing, that France, however she might have resented our refusal to receive her minister, for the evidence it afforded of designs against her independence, scorned at all times to rest any part of her title upon our consent. It is equally fortunate for us that she is ready to accept our submission without asking any questions ;

tions ; that we are saved either by her generosity or her contempt, from the mortification of receiving the very credentials we disdained to open in 1792 ; and that it was Citizen Lauriston, and not Citizen Chauvelin, whom our beloved Sovereign beheld from the windows of his palace, borne in triumph upon the shoulders of his people !

We have, therefore, by the Treaty of Amiens, recognised France as a republic, first, for what we wanted from her ; next, as finally disclaiming all right to dispute under what government it may be her will to live. Mr. Fox's recommendation on these two points is followed. It now remains to be seen, whether there was much that deserved attention in the objections of those who maintained that, by recognition, we should countenance the crimes of which France had then recently been guilty. For those with whom this was once a favourite argument, it is fortunate that it was a weak one, otherwise they would now be parties to a mass of guilt, more heavy and more black than all their penitent tears could ever wash away. For, what are the facts ? At the time when Mr. Fox made his motion, the French Convention had not begun the trial of the King. At the time of Mr. Pitt's recognition, they had put him to death. Bad designs against the King's person was all that could be imputed to the provisional Executive Council in December 1792. His actual murder, and the principles on which it was committed, were consecrated in the Directorial Government, and in the persons of the five Directors, to whom Mr. Pitt sent Lord Malmesbury in 1796. When Mr. Fox made his motion, the decree of the 19th of November, unsatisfactorily explained by an unau-

thorized agent, was capable of being fully explained, or entirely abandoned, through the medium of a regular one. When Lord Malmesbury went to Paris in 1796, it had been acted upon by the French Generals in the Netherlands; and our authorized negotiator had not only to procure satisfactory explanations of this decree, but the restitution of ten provinces occupied by the French armies. The detail of the other crimes committed by the French governments between this and September 1796, it were needless to enumerate; and the late Ministers, who in 1792 refused to recognise the republic for fear of being implicated in the crimes of which France had been guilty, must have reflected with some shame when they were making out Lord Malmesbury's commission, that what they were then doing was free from criminality in exactly the proportion that their arguments against doing it before were devoid of reason.

From the whole of the preceding argument, therefore, it is plain that there has not been a Minister of them all, past or present, who in some shape or other did not recognise the republic regularly every year almost since the war; that they recognised not in their own way as a condition, but in Mr. Fox's as a preliminary; not when the power of the republic was low, and its example comparatively feeble, but constantly when it was victorious; as they have now most emphatically recognised it when it has subdued Europe, and is dazzling the eyes of mankind with the great prize in the lottery of revolutions*.

* " Is it nothing with a view to influence and example, whether the fortune of this last adventurer in the lottery of revolutions shall appear to be permanent?" Mr. Pitt's Speech, February 1800, page 106.

It is shewn that in every one of the preceding periods of recognition down to the peace, Ministers were forced to adopt to the very letter the principles of Mr. Fox's reasoning, when he made this his third motion to the House of Commons; that the Treaty of Peace confirms for ever that reasoning, and places in the clearest light the advantages of an early and voluntary recognition over a distant and extorted one; since in the latter case we either bear the disgrace of yielding to force what we refuse to reason, or fall into the very error we have been labouring with so much care to avoid; namely, that of giving a positive pledge of sanction and approbation to a state of things, about which it is ever the wiser course for a nation to be silent. Between these two situations, the counsels of the late Ministers have compelled us to choose.

HERE ENDS the history of the recognition. Why it was so vehemently resisted in 1792 will not be easily comprehended when we reflect upon events, whether upon those of former periods, or those which are immediately before us. The spirit in which it was rejected, indeed, and the effects of indulging that spirit, are somewhat more visible. They drove the nation into a war, the Objects of which, and the Motives to it, were equally vague, unintelligible, and contradictory. To what extent those motives governed the confederacy after we had joined it; how far they influenced its character; how far they exercised their capricious sway over the vacillating counsels of the British Cabinet; how far the state of Europe at the peace is owing to their prevalence in those counsels, is the next and last point we have to consider. On this inexhaustible topic it is difficult to comprehend, and impossible,

impossible, except in a work of wider scope, to be full. Every campaign, and each month in every campaign, presents fresh matter, which, when the time is come for History to discharge her office, she will not fail to exhibit under its proper aspect of circumstance and form, and its regular series of deduction from cause to effect. All that can be attempted for the present, is to advert shortly to those results of fact which are nearest in sight, and to the general heads of argument under which most of them will be found to fall.

The results are, indeed, simple enough. The monarchy of France is gone; and all other monarchies laid bare on the side where they touched it. The balance of Europe is gone. The security Great Britain enjoyed through that balance is gone. According to arguments of which Mr. Pitt did not scorn the benefit, although he carefully shunned the responsibility they brought with them, order, morality, religion itself, are gone. Society is poisoned at the spring-head.

Have all these mischiefs happened by what is called accident? Has virtue done its utmost? and is it Providence alone that we are to charge with our undoing, and with having disappointed the uniform and steady sagacity of man? It may be so; but it will at least be decent in us, first to search for our failure in our frailty. It will then be seen, that in this great business, trick, subterfuge, and petty contrivance, have only led to their natural and certain end. The confederacy was lame and heartless when it set out; and perplexity and duplicity governed it throughout its progress. The conduct of the British government offers no exception to this censure. It was just as disingenuous towards its own subjects,

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and towards the royalists of France, as that of the German confederates was to the rest of the world. Throughout it was indecision and want of system. Self was the predominant object. Ministers could never venture to advance a step forwards, without turning round to see that all was safe behind them. Our very first motion was of this stamp. It was deemed a master-stroke of political contrivance to get into the war as it were by a back door. We made ourselves as small as we could, to slide in through the gap of a treaty by which we had guaranteed to the Dutch that the river Scheldt should not be navigated. This was the station the Minister chose for calling forth his pride and his strength. Give him but to set his foot upon the Continent, and our great mechanic was to shew with what a force he could wield the machine; and bring all the main springs of human action into play. But he was deceived. He had formed no just estimate of the weight he was to stir. Above all, he had forgotten that a war which pretended to be a war of honour, admitted of nothing doubtful, nothing double in its character; that it could not be a war of sentiment to-day, and of plunder to-morrow.

It was the intent, and would have been the effect, of Mr. Fox's motion to clear the cause of quarrel between the two countries from every thing of an ambiguous nature, either in its character or object. As all wars must end at some time or other, it seemed therefore to be doing Ministers a service to put them as soon as possible into the right road to peace. If they had meant fairly they would have adopted it, as a motion not tending to embarrass, but very considerably to relieve them. They had to prepare for a long

race with an enemy of whose speed they were allowed no trial, and whose physical strength they could ill guess at through any of their moral prognostics. Ministers, however, stuck to “*Examining Circumstances*,” that is, to chance and accident, to bring them through. In the means they took to oppose the new experimental system, they began by resigning themselves absolutely to its direction. Either they had forgotten, or they were quite insensible to, the importance of clearness and precision in their purposes, with a view to Success. In a war for our preservation, success, as definable by the attainment of any of those objects, which, according to them, were to ensure preservation, was wholly out of their thoughts. To destroy jacobinism they would restore the monarchy. But *what* monarchy? To *whom* would they render it back? On what conditions? At what risk to themselves would they make the trial? They would drive France within her old limits. What then? Would they be content without dismembering her? In what proportions, or by what principle of equivalency in pillage, should they parcel out her territories? What government should they set up in the rest? These were matters they never once thought of settling, even in their own minds; and such unfortunately was the state of Europe, that they were under no necessity of coming to explanations upon them with others. For what power was there who felt any interest for the good of France? Had she been forced upon her frontier, who would have taken her part? Who would have interposed to prevent her division; her reduction, possibly, to the condition of Poland, there to open another “*ILIADE OF WOES*” to mankind, to be the theatre of endless wars for the poor

remnant that would have been spared a few years longer by the jealous avarice of the coalition? Men who reasoned, therefore, saw plainly that it became at last a point of policy with Ministers, leaving as they did every thing to chance, to keep all distinct ideas of success totally out of sight. The idea of success necessarily included that of a positive object. The moment a positive object should be declared, it would become impossible to restrain mankind from forming sober estimates of its value and of its risk, and mortifying comparisons between the extent of our means, and the wisdom of their application. Hence the Minister, in replying to his opponents, always dealt with them in universals. Did they ask him, what he meant by *necessity*, as forming the character of the war? His answer was, that it was necessary for our *security*. Did they ask what he meant by *security*? He answered them, that it was a settlement of the affairs of Europe in such a manner as to make war no longer *necessary*. Under these magical words all the auxiliary topics of social order, civil society, and so forth, were soon disciplined and arrayed. We got no respite from their din. Our reason found no resting-place in its search after their meaning. We were driven round the circle until we grew giddy and dropped.

It was clear that no just idea of success could have been arrived at without first understanding what was meant by security. There was security of *Territory*, and security of *Government*. All we were ever able to eviscerate from the Minister upon this point was, that, if he made peace with the Republic, he was resolved to exact from her a security on the side of territory proportionate to the danger on that of government; but that, if he made peace with the Monarchy, he would be

content with little or none. It seemed therefore his obvious course, granting him to be very earnest in this resolution, to endeavour to bring about that state of things in which we might find security with the least deviation from the former condition of Europe. To restore the Monarchy in this view must have been ten thousand times preferable to dividing France. That this was an object with the late Ministry, they have avowed. They tried for it as if it had been none ; nay, as if they had meant it should fail. In the way in which they supported monarchy, they never brought its strength to a trial. This Monarchy of thirteen centuries has slipped from under their hands literally without their having made a single effort to hold or to recover it. There have been, it is true, several struggles in the name of the Monarchy carried on in various parts of France against the Republic ; but not one general, combined plan, proceeding upon rational grounds with a view to success, has ever once been attempted by the coalition. These desultory efforts, made under the direction of no presiding mind or principle, have only served to discover who were royalists, and to get them extirpated in detail. The facts are before us. They are neither exaggerated in their statement, nor in their consequences. Let those in England, who wished this object to succeed, and who conscientiously believed that the head of their own Sovereign could not otherwise be safe, take the trouble to resort to the state of France at the end of the very first campaign. Let it be supposed that the allies, faithful to the declared purpose of an honest concert, had, upon the taking of Valenciennes, proclaimed Louis the Seventeenth, established the regent in that important fortress, called

called thither the old states of the kingdom, and speaking the language of moderation to the people of France, offered them peace under any form of monarchy they might agree to among themselves ; that, under the convoy of British fleets, auxiliary armies had been assembled at Toulon, then occupied by British and Spanish arms, and the French Royalists in the south been enabled, under this powerful protection, to stretch out their hands to their brethren at Lyons ; that while the republican forces to the south-west carried on a doubtful defensive contest in the Pyrenees, British squadrons had been employed in pouring into La Vendée some part of that immense body of force which the subsidiary treaties with Hesse, Baden, Hesse-Darmstadt, Hanover, and others, had placed at the British Minister's absolute disposal ; that this force, joining itself to the population of the most populous, the most daring, the most zealous, and the most disciplined district of all France, calling out with one voice for a Prince of the Blood to lead them on, had brought them that leader, and proved to them, by his presence, that there was in truth a common cause among the sovereigns of Europe, and that cause the restoration of their own :—let such views and such efforts be supposed for a moment, and then let any friend to the cause of French Monarchy, comparing them with what was actually done by the Allies, say, whether that cause was not shamefully betrayed ? Whether a war upon this principle, weighed against the schemes of the confederacy, who had so contrived their system, that upon the first check in a campaign they were necessarily thrown upon the defensive for the rest of it, would not have been the height of wisdom, of feasibility, and

even of justice? But above all, and arguing from the Minister's own speculation of what was the true security for Europe, whether he was not bound in duty to have made the experiment, and to have bent all his faculties, and directed all his exertions to its success?

The opportunities for attempting a counter-revolution upon these principles (considering the question abstractedly from all ideas of good faith to the royalist party were, during the war, many and favourable. Nothing in the shape of sound objection was ever advanced against it by the Ministers. The true objection was a secret—a secret that owed its keeping to the state of parties in the House of Commons. Mr. Windham and his friends did not care that Opposition should have the benefit of their divisions upon this point with the Ministers they were acting under. The truth is, that to make the experiment with any prospect of success, plain-dealing was indispensable, and something more was wanting in the nature of a distinct pledge than the confederates were disposed to grant. Previous to such an attempt, it was necessary that they should renounce their design of dividing France. They never could have hoped, that as a preliminary step, and by way of price for their precarious succour, the Princes of the Blood of France would submit to become the agents of their ambition, and agree to the partition of their country, and the vassalage of its crown. But the confederates were not so ready to forego their hopes. Their object was plunder. It was either to plunder France against her consent, or to plunder Europe with it. No person, on this point, will refuse the testimony of Mr. Burke;—

“ As long as there was any appearance of success, the spirit of aggrandizement, and consequently the spirit of mutual jealousy, seized on the coalesced powers. Some fought accession of territory at the expense of France ; some at the expense of each other ; some at the expense of third parties ; and when the vicissitude of disaster took its turn, they found common distress a treacherous bond of faith and friendship.

“ It would answer no great purpose to enter into the particular errors of the war. The whole has been but one error. It was but nominally a war of alliance. As the combined powers pursued it, there was nothing to hold an alliance together. THERE COULD BE NO TIE OF HONOUR IN A SOCIETY FOR PILLAGE*.”

If Mr. Fox’s motion had been acceded to, or even if it had been rejected upon the only consistent ground that could have been assigned for rejecting it, namely, “ that with those whom we are determined to destroy, it is useless to treat ;” certainly we should have heard nothing of this “ Society for pillage.” In this latter case, we should have joined the league of Kings, avowedly for the objects declared in their manifesto of August 1792. Had this been done in good earnest, it is difficult to suppose that a power of the rank of Great Britain would not have had authority enough to keep down all those little pillaging propensities which the members of “ the Society” discovered upon their entrance into France, soon after the expulsion of Dumourier from the Netherlands, in 1793. In addition to

* Two Letters on a Regicide Peace, p. 148, 9.

this, the object of obtaining from France a security on the side of Government, would have been pursued, if with no very great hope of success rationally speaking, at least with that improved prospect of it which must have arisen from establishing a community of views among the confederates, and a co-operation with friends in the interior of France, whose force alone was worth all that could be brought against her from without.

Let us however suppose the other event; that Mr. Fox's motion had been adopted, that the policy to which it pointed, had been pursued by Ministers, that a negotiator had been dispatched to Paris to "demand *" satisfaction (the cause of quarrel being once ascertained, and proved to be just), and notwithstanding this, that satisfaction had been refused. War of course would have followed. The security in that case to be looked for by us, would have been a security on the side of Territory: and the question will be, whether the chance of obtaining that security not only for ourselves and our ally, Holland, but even for those infatuated continental Powers who expected France to fall any easy prey into their hands, was not greater through the medium of a confederacy of which Great Britain could take the lead and direction, than by our falling in with one whose declared purposes we could not justify, whose conduct we could not influence, and for whose good faith we had no security?

It will be asked, could such a confederacy have been formed? Whether Mr. Pitt and his colleagues could have formed it, may be a question; but that Europe afforded the materials for

* Vide Mr. Fox's text, p. 37 and 38.

at, and had cogent motives to it, is what no man will deny. If the bringing it about was difficult to Ministers, this at least is certain, that the system to which Mr. Fox's motion led, presented the broadest foundation for a Grand Alliance, and the only one, if history be worth trusting to, on which it could rest. But that it was in itself practicable; that such an alliance, bottomed upon permanent interests, and long views to the future, might have been formed and consolidated; that all our blunders from the convention of Pilnitz to the end of 1792 might yet have been retrieved; that those declared purposes of the German coalition* which had roused the French nation to arms, might have been renounced for the sake of restoring a general balance, as they were afterwards renounced for the sake of particular pillage, Mr. Pitt seems himself to have believed by the views he opened to Russia, even so late as the 29th of December. The dispatch containing them, and which he produced in his speech of February 1800†, is a very judicious exposition of the nature

* Duke of Brunswick's Manifesto, 25th July 1795.

† " The two leading points on which such an explanation will naturally turn, are the line of conduct to be followed previous to the commencement of hostilities, and with a view, if possible, to avert them; and the nature and amount of the forces which the powers engaged in this concert might be enabled to use, supposing such extremities unavoidable.

" With respect to the first, it appears on the whole, subject however to future consideration and discussion with the other powers, that the most advisable step to be taken would be, that sufficient explanation should be had with the powers at war with France, in order to enable those not hitherto engaged in the war to propose to that country terms of peace. That these terms should be, the withdrawing their arms within the limits of the French territory; the abandoning their conquests; the rescinding any acts injurious to the sovereignty or rights of any other nations, and the giving in some public and unequivocal manner a pledge of their intention no longer to foment troubles, or to excite disturbances against other governments. In return for these stipulations,

nature and objects of such an alliance ; but independent of the error of taking up this policy at so late a period, an error which was yet retrievable, two other errors attended the transaction which were not so ; namely, our addressing these proposals to Russia, and our not addressing them to France.

The proposal, as Mr. Pitt stated †, was made upon the pressure of the occasion. He became alarmed for the balance of Europe, and after General Dumourier had appeared at the gates of Holland with 120,000 men, he sent for assistance —whither ? To the Arctic Circle ! As good fortune would have it, no harm resulted from this to Holland. The Dutch, when actually attacked, repelled their invaders with spirit ; and the Minister, in the joy which that event gave us, was forgiven his having exposed our allies for so many months absolutely defenceless. The projected concert with Russia therefore, may be considered as intended solely to secure the balance of Europe. Now of all the continental powers, why was Russia selected for this purpose ? Did it ever occur to any other Minister that Russia was the power whose interests came so immediately into contact

“ stipulations, the different powers of Europe, who should be
 “ parties to this measure, might engage to abandon all measures,
 “ or views of hostility against France, or interference in their in-
 “ ternal affairs, and to maintain a correspondence and intercourse of
 “ amity with the existing powers in that country, with whom
 “ such a treaty may be concluded. If, on the result of this pro-
 “ posal so made by the powers acting in concert, these terms should
 “ not be accepted by France, or being accepted, should not be
 “ satisfactorily performed, the different powers might then engage
 “ themselves to each other to enter into active measures, for the
 “ purpose of obtaining the ends in view ; and it may be to be con-
 “ sidered, whether, in such case, they might not reasonably look
 “ to some indemnity for the expenses and hazards to which they
 “ would necessarily be exposed.”

† Vide his Speech, February 1800.

with the objects of French ambition, that it was to her the rest of Europe was to look as the main stay and pillar of a grand alliance whenever it might become fit to form one? It is said that this was the only power with which we could act, since the two others to which we should naturally have addressed ourselves, were then engaged in the war for a purpose we disclaimed. A singular argument enough! for it supposes not only that it was fit and becoming in the British and Russian empires to carry on the under-plot of this drama, but that we were to suffer an alliance, formed for the just purposes stated in this dispatch, to become an instrument in the hands of those very powers to whom we had avoided addressing ourselves as principals specifically on account of the unjustifiable schemes in which they were engaged. To this project of a grand alliance the objections were many and decisive.

But the greatest error of all, was the silence which was observed at this period towards France. Again let us look to dates. On the 27th of December M. Chauvelin had required of Ministers "a frank and open declaration as to their intentions with regard to France*;" and had offered, beforehand, explanations on certain points on which the French Government conceived that a rupture might take place with Great Britain. On the 29th, Ministers sent off their plan of alliance, and the detail of its purposes, to Russia; but they kept back their answer to M. Chauvelin until the 31st; and even then Lord Grenville confined himself in it entirely to the unsatisfactory nature of the explanations offered by the French Council to the objections they had themselves

* Vide Debrett's State Papers, vol. i. p. 224.

anticipated †. “The frank and clear explanation “of his views,” instead of communicating through M. Chauvelin to France, he reserved to be communicated by Lord Whitworth to Russia. Now let us only suppose that Lord Grenville had opened to M. Chauvelin the substance of this dispatch of the 29th, instead of sending him the angry answer he did on the 31st, and will it then be denied that the country would have derived these three advantages from such a proceeding; first, that by a fair possibility, and supposing for the sake of argument Ministers to have been pacifically inclined, it might have led to a re-establishment of the good understanding with France? Secondly, that it would have removed the chief difficulty in the way of future peace, by clearly ascertaining the object of the war? And thirdly, that we and the rest of Europe, if France had refused us the satisfaction required, would have found a common tie of alliance, and a principle of steady and vigorous co-operation?

To have communicated these proposals to France, therefore, was not only the duty, but certainly would have been the policy of Ministers, had they really intended to limit their warlike exertions to objects of a nature purely defensive, and those secured, fairly to leave France to the settlement of her internal concerns. For what would then have been their conduct? Having to choose between two principles of war, they would have chosen in a manner so decisive and unambiguous, as, in pursuing that for which they declared, to preclude the possibility of resorting afterwards to that which they disclaimed. The substance of the dispatch to Russia, therefore,

† Vide State Papers, vol. i. p. 227.

instead

instead of being coldly mentioned at that court, and that court only, where it appears to have died away in a whisper, would have been addressed to Austria, Prussia, and the German states, as offering the basis of an alliance on the condition of their renouncing, *in limine*, all project of imposing a government upon France. Had this line been adopted, and vigorously pursued by Great Britain, accompanied by explicit declarations that such, and such only, were the terms on which her Ministers could consent to embark her in a continental war, what must have followed? Inevitably one of these consequences,—that if France, upon notification of our terms, had accepted, and the German powers refused them, we should have remained most honourably at peace; or that if those powers had accepted, and France refused them, we should have had such an alliance against her as Europe never yet assembled together against any danger or any usurpation. That both France and the other powers would have rejected these terms for any length of time, supposing Great Britain to have been in earnest, will be believed by no man who recollects how many millions it has cost us during the late war to bring even Austria into the field.

Thus Mr. Pitt's proposal for a grand alliance came to nothing. In fact it was no proposal; it was no more than a feeble advance to the continental powers to come to some understanding with regard to future operations. He had delayed taking a part so long, and had missed so many opportunities of assuming the lead, that when at last he was in a situation which obliged to act, he found himself standing alone, without the least weight or authority in Europe. That authority

might have been recovered, but it could only have been recovered by the adoption of a system the very reverse of that by which he had lost it. The German powers had formed their confederacy without him, and formed it upon principles totally opposite to those of the Grand Alliance in 1701. They had formed it, as he might have known, if not in concert with Russia, certainly with her consent. To new-model this confederacy therefore, and reduce it to the principles of the grand alliance, was the only mode through which Mr. Pitt could expect to retrieve the affairs of his country, and the errors of his former irresolution; and there was no way of doing this but by putting an alternative directly and decisively to France, and to the other Powers at war, grounded upon the views explained in his dispatch to Russia of the 29th. To have adopted this policy was completely in Mr. Pitt's power on the 16th of December, the day on which Mr. Fox made the motion now under consideration, and still continued to be so on the 27th, the day on which M. Chauvelin presented his memorial. But opposite ideas unhappily prevailed, and the dispatch to Russia was hurried off on the 29th, Ministers having at that time resolved upon the hostile answer which they communicated to M. Chauvelin on the 31st; an answer which appears to have been delayed to the 31st for the express purpose of augmenting the difficulties in the way of an amicable arrangement with France. The Minister's mode of proceeding, therefore, threw him absolutely into the hands of the confederates. Reduced by his previous measures to the necessity of turning to the Continent for help, all he could do was to represent to the Court of St. Petersburgh the steps most advisable in his mind to

to be taken for a general concert ; and upon the refusal of the other powers to listen to him, he had nothing left but either to retract those measures, or to fall in with the scheme of operations which the confederates had already settled. For this reason he never could assume the control of the confederacy as its efficient head. Hence the total want of system or good intelligence, or heart in the war, from first to last. Hence the separate peace of the King of Prussia, as soon as we had reimbursed him the expenses of his three mock campaigns. Hence that tempest of mutual reproach and recrimination in which the allies carried on their joint operations against the enemy, and that bitterness of mind among them which so well illustrates Mr. Burke's maxim, that *when there is no tie of honour to bind an alliance together, they who are parties to it " will find " COMMON MISFORTUNE A TREACHEROUS " BOND OF FAITH AND FRIENDSHIP."*

As the war was planned and conducted therefore, Success appears to have been impossible from the beginning. The restoration of Europe, in all points, to the situation in which it stood previous to the dethronement of the King of France, never was attempted. This principle of war suited none of the confederates. The cause of French Monarchy for its own sake, was absolutely indifferent to them ; that of the balance of power for its own sake, was nearly the same ; consequently they never fairly put forward either of the two sentiments proper to such objects. Thus they missed them both. They made the cause of Monarchy a diversion in favour of that of pillage, sacrificing without mercy to their cold-blooded ambition not only the lives of their own subjects, but thousands upon thousands in

France whom they had seduced by promises, persuasion, and in some instances by positive treaty, to hold off from all terms with the republic. The Balance of Power was lost by Mr. Pitt's indecision, and the materials for a Grand Alliance crumbled to pieces in his hands. Such is the condition in which Europe is found at the peace ; a condition the more to be deplored, as every part of its humiliation and weakness is the result of our own folly in trusting its fate to the abilities of the late Ministers. For if a grand alliance had been formed at the period, and upon the principles, recommended by Mr. Fox, this good would have been derived from it ;—that whether the war had been completely successful, or only partially so, or had totally failed, we should have kept the principle of a Balance in sight at the peace. If completely successful, we could desire no more ; if partially so, there would have been a fund of equivalents by means of which the principle of mutual restitution might have been applied to the restoration of a balance : while in the event of failure, and supposing the war to have ended ever so unprosperously to the allies, there would still have been some means of gathering together the fragments of the world, and embodying them for one remaining desperate stand against future aggression. In the present condition of Europe all that hope is at an end ; the great fellowship of states is gone and extinguished for ever.

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